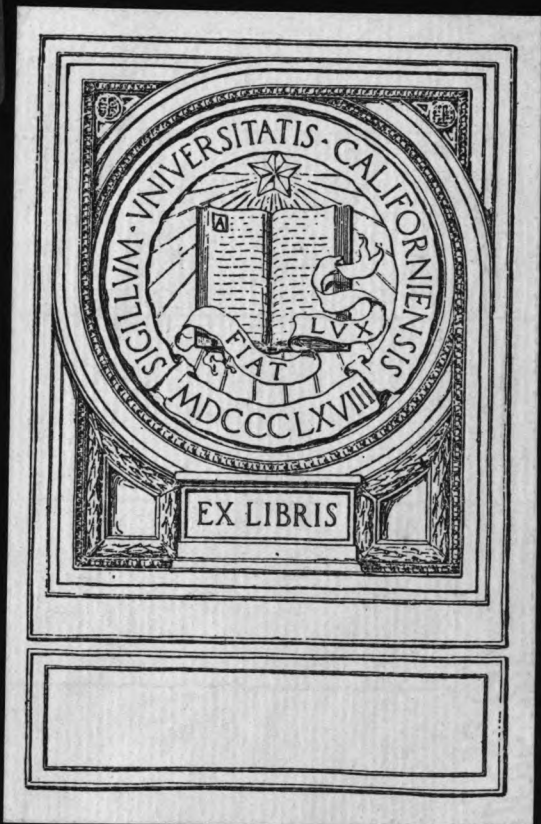

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

GoogleTM books

<https://books.google.com>





BOOKS BY M. R. WERNER

BARNUM

BRIGHAM YOUNG

TAMMANY HALL

BRYAN

“ORDERLY!”

**JONATHAN CAPE AND HARRISON SMITH, INCORPORATED,
139 EAST 46TH STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y. AND 77 WELLINGTON
STREET, WEST, TORONTO, CANADA; JONATHAN CAPE, LTD.,
30 BEDFORD SQUARE, LONDON, W. C. 1, ENGLAND**

“ORDERLY!”

BY M. R. WERNER

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

NEW YORK

JONATHAN CAPE & HARRISON SMITH

COPYRIGHT, 1930, BY M. R. WERNER

FIRST PUBLISHED 1930

D 570

.9

W38

70 MAR
ABERDEEN

CONTENTS

I. FROM THE FOOT OF WALL STREET TO NORMANDY . . .	1
II. CASINO FIVE	41
III. ROCHES A	93
IV. THE OFFICERS' HOSPITAL . .	143
V. STATISTICS	169
VI. THE WAY TO RELEASE . . .	193

765623

I

FROM THE FOOT OF WALL
STREET TO NORMANDY

WHEN Arthur James Balfour called at the White House in April, 1917, to discuss with Woodrow Wilson some of the practical details of America's decision to go to war, he asked for six hospital units to be sent to France immediately. British doctors, he said, had been killed in large numbers, and as soon as Americans could be substituted at the base, more Englishmen could be sent to the front. A few days later the front page of the *New York Times* contained a long request for plumbers, clerks, students and anyone else of sound mentality and fair physique who wished to go to France at once. Soon afterwards I found myself full of typhoid germs, walking along Fifth Avenue on a brilliant May day. Every corner lamp-post

"ORDERLY!"

had flags of the Allies; people seemed excited and happy. I met the maiden aunt of a young friend who looked at me waspishly and said: "You look terrible; I know, you're worried about submarines. I think it's awful." Yes, I nodded, and walked away as fast as my typhoid would carry me, for I knew that she was busy preventing her nephew from going to France. Some months later the same woman sent me five hundred cigarettes with cork tips.

Every evening for a week the red brick, dismal hospital building was crowded with confused bodies. Outstretched arms and bent-over smalls of backs were awaiting their first or second typhoid inoculations; stethoscopes were steadily recording palpitations; sheets of paper were testing the flatness of varied feet; bent-over backsides were being examined intently by inquisitive surgeons; a fat boy was tearfully telling a patient doctor that he really could get about fast on his feet. In another room rows of ten men were waiting, worn with inoculations and examinations, to swear unconcernedly that they would uphold the Constitution of the United States, which

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

was being represented by a goggled regular army major, whose scraggly beard did not quite hide his lack of chin.

No one *knew* anything. One night it was said that we would sail in two days; another night we were told to take with us no money that was not gold, and then someone else said that all gold would be confiscated immediately in France and returned at the end of the war — a too indefinite date for those whose interests were so immediate. But, finally, out of the confusion came a command: we were requested to be at the foot of Wall Street, where the East River joins it, at eight o'clock the following morning with our oldest clothes and all that we desired to place in one piece of baggage. It was then after eleven o'clock of a dim May night, and my father and mother were at a wedding. Searching nervously through closets, I discovered that on their family-famous tour of Europe in 1907 my family had stayed mainly at hotels in Germany, and that the porters had been so efficient in their labelling that it was impossible even with a warm, wet washcloth and

“ORDERLY!”

tears of exasperation to remove the incriminating evidence from a single suitcase in the house, so that I was forced to go to France carrying hostile propaganda and thoroughly convinced that I should be shot.

At the foot of Wall Street one stood on the dock trying to size up the companions with whom, for better or for worse, one was fated to spend an altogether indefinite period of personality. It was somewhat like that terrifying first day at school, except that one was taller, and the newspapers were saying that things like this were glorious things to be doing.

Those who had persuaded one another to join were gathered in their own groups talking quietly, while in and out of these scurried sanguine individuals, whose excitement kept them moving, and everyone was trying to be good-natured with perfect strangers, for, after all, it was to be for better or for worse, and the first attempt was to make the best of it. Bags of various shapes stood at feet that were waiting to be told where to move.

Eventually we walked onto a tender

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

operated by the U. S. Army. Four men in uniforms, which we were not yet experienced enough to identify as nothing more important than those of sergeants, stood sullenly in corners of the deck. The rest of us still looked varied in our oldest clothes. One group of three, I remember distinctly. A blond young man in a steamer cap wore slung across his shoulders a pig skin case, which might have contained binoculars, or only a camera. Next to him was another man, short, young and immaculately dressed, whose nose tilted in the supercilious manner of one who was found in a basket on the doorsteps of the Junior League; he wore an amber cigarette holder. With them was a sandy-haired man in tweeds and a *pince-nez*. They might have been waiting for the photographers who meet the *Aquitania* to demand what they thought of our high buildings and our low women for the benefit of the observers of a Sunday pictorial section. Their evident sense of their superiority was effective, and it preserved for them their equally evident and easily comprehensible desire not to meet anyone

“ORDERLY!”

until the accidents of war had effected a necessary introduction.

The sights and sounds of the East River and the sunlight produced a pleasant gaiety in the hundred and twenty-five men who were on their way they knew not where. Very few asked questions, for already no one believed in the authenticity of anybody's answers. For a couple of hours the army tender passed calmly up the East River, while men moved from one side of its small deck to the other, or sat on their baggage and smoked, speculating on when we would sail and where we would go.

“Get in line, you sons of bitches!” It was the purple-faced of the four regular army sergeants who was speaking to us, just after we had piled in a disordered group from the tender onto the ground, which looked out on a large bay of blue water. The man who stood next to me was shocked and offended; we all were startled out of our diffidence. The offended one wore a beard; his blue eyes looked quiet and learned; comparatively he was quite dignified; I thought he might have

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

been somebody, but later he turned out to have been an instructor in romance languages at an American university, whose idea of his own dignity was so highly developed that he took it quite seriously when he was made a lance-corporal; I resolved never to trust a beard again. "I'd like to get him," the beard murmured to me angrily, as we both hurried to do as we had been so sharply directed to do. The line of men in civilian clothes, carrying their bags, moved up a hill along a gravel path, on either side of which were grassy parade grounds. We soon realized that we were at some one of New York's forts.

Fort Rotten — which was not quite its name — was what we lovingly learned to think of this establishment as, before the four days of our residence there were ended. This general attitude was induced largely by the fact that the worst food it was our lot to taste while under the care of the government was served to us in this peaceful establishment on Long Island Sound. It was rumoured that the cook and his assistants had stolen most of the money allotted to them to feed us, and that our

“ORDERLY!”

meals were the result. The diet was exclusively salmon of a nature not even equalled by later doses of that fish, which was so abundant and therefore so frequent that in the minds of millions of men today a shudder of unconscious reminiscence passes as charming hostesses unwittingly offer what we used to call “gold fish.” The coffee, it was rumoured, was filled with saltpetre, and some said that this was an ancient army custom. That theory I accepted to account for its otherwise unaccountable taste: it had an afterclap, and my own personal impression was that rusty tin had been treated with a drug.

Looking back upon it now, that first night in an army barracks was luxurious discomfort, in the light of some of the events of the future and the memories of the immediate past. The canvas cots were not so easy as what one had just left, nor so difficult as the chicken wire which was sometimes to come. Sleeping in the same room with fifty men was novel for all except some who had been used to living in lodging-houses.

In one corner of the barracks was a

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

group, gathered obsequiously around one of the four army sergeants assigned to be our guardians. They were trying to find out what was the proper thing to do, and as I crawled into my blanket, I heard this boyish little sergeant, who was standing on the canvas of his cot in his breeches and undershirt looking down on his group of admirers, say: "Of course, you *can* sleep in pajamas if you want to, but *I* never do."

After we were awakened, we were fed in a clean room with long wooden tables, and as soon as we were fed, we cleaned up ourselves, our beds and our belongings and swept our barracks. Then we were drilled, that is, we were talked to about right face and left face, making it all the more confusing to accomplish. There was one man who, all during our period of service, was taken aside by various noncommissioned officers and taught the theory of about face, the practice of which he never succeeded in mastering. Some said, on the authority of the subject himself, that one leg was deformed, but memories of chem-

“ORDERLY!”

istry books which began with the instruction, “Take a test tube,” made me sympathetic with his difficulties. After marching on the soft green grass for an hour in two long lines, which, as yet, could only be turned around by the altogether too simple and elongated process of facing them right or left, because the process of forming in squads of fours had not yet been drummed into us, we were sent back to our barracks, where a sinister-looking officer in neat webbed khaki, who wore glasses *à la* President Wilson, suddenly appeared. We were shouted at, “Attention!” by a sergeant who preceded him, and this so startled us that we did the proper thing, namely, rose quickly to our feet.

There we stood for more than two hours, while Captain E., who had been to West Point at one period of his life — which is something, apparently, that a man does not easily forget — read us each and every Army Regulation. All I remember today, and all I remembered five minutes afterwards, was the refrain which seemed to come at the end of each one: “Death,

10

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

or as the court martial may direct." For hours afterwards men went madly about the barracks in their spare time shouting at each other: "*Death, or asthecourtmar-tialmaydirect!*" It was exactly the same effect as that produced many months later when E. H. Sothern, looking fatter than Othello in a new Y. M. C. A. uniform, visited our town in France and entertained us by reciting: first, "The Star Spangled Banner," which all of us had heard before, and then Alfred Noyes's "The Highway-man." For days afterwards men greeted each other on the streets as they went to work or to meals with: "*Bess, the land-lord's daughter, the landlord's cock-eyed daughter!*"

Nobody knew what to do with us after the reading of the Army Regulations, and we did not know what to do with each other, for the amusements of the area to which we were confined were limited, so we stood about smoking, getting acquainted and waiting. Sometimes I recalled that long article in the *New York Times*, which had stirred my enthusiasm and pointed a way out of Columbia Uni-

“ORDERLY!”

versity without the tedious process of graduation; it had said that we would sail for France immediately. It was not yet two weeks since I had read that article, but one was impatient, excited, uprooted. One day we were told that we might go in to New York City, but that we must be back in the barracks by nine-thirty that night: “Death, or as the court martial may direct.” This was not an unalloyed pleasure. I had been able to say good-bye to my family in such a hurry that morning at seven when I had left for the foot of Wall Street, that there had been no time for tears, and I did not like the idea of doing it all over again in leisure. But, on the other hand, home cooking after a few days of the salmon was a joyful prospect, and I knew that my father would give me a box of cigars.

At last, one bright May morning, we were sent down the river again, and, turning round in the Bay, were landed on a dock in the Hudson River, where an American passenger steamer was waiting to sail. It was the *St. Louis*, one of the two passenger ships which were making

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

trips in defiance of submarines. As yet the United States had no army transports, and the rigidity of the war had not yet set in, for the dock had all the appearance of a summer sailing to Europe. We went about the steamer feeling free, and we were happy to be getting away from the fort and on our way to wherever we were going. One of the few signs that we were going anywhere near a war was a group of U. S. Navy gunners and four large guns, which were mounted on the deck of the steamer. A famous motion picture actress was among the first class passengers. Trunks were being carried everywhere. And we hundred and twenty-five new soldiers were scurrying about individually, still in our civilian clothes, and still unrestrained by discipline. Our officers, most of them doctors, and new to the game as we were, appeared elegant in new, tailored uniforms. A steward came chasing around in my vicinity shouting, "Mr. Werner." I could not believe him, but stopped him, and he led me to where my father was waiting on the dock with one of my brothers and a box of cigars.

“ORDERLY!”

Bugles blew hurriedly, and eventually the grey ship moved out into the sunny river, while thousands of hands and handkerchiefs informed anyone in Germany who might be interested that America was sending its first contingents to France. One hospital unit had preceded us a few days before. There was nothing grim and nothing maudlin about our departure — no dead-of-night quality; it was gay, sunlit and careless, for, fortunately, warlike seriousness had not yet set in. We were scarcely numerous enough to be worth a torpedo or a convoy.

We soldiers were assigned places in the steerage alphabetically, but before W was reached, the steerage was already overcrowded, so that I found myself in a second class cabin with two other W's and under the influence of a Scotch steward, who was certain that we were to be torpedoed. At night we three W's sometimes sat in our cabin and listened to him. He assured us that if he arrived safely in Liverpool this trip, he would make no others, and he insisted that the crossings these days were so dangerous that it was impossible to get

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

stewards to make more than one trip. I did not quite believe him, but I could not help being interested in his assurance. My attitude towards drowning was similar to that of one of my nieces, who, when her mother read her the statement that men were descended from monkeys, looked at her wisely and said: "No, not I, mother dear, not I." But then I knew nothing of submarines except what I had read in the newspapers. Some days later, when we arrived in the Irish Sea, where the days were grey and the water windy, the proper touch of terror was added to the submarine's meaning: we saw empty lifeboats, the taffrails of sunken ships and the mahogany fixings of their interiors; the naval gunners were responsible for the rumours of dead bodies floating by last night, and we were ordered to keep our life-belts around our waists at all times, and even to sleep in them. It was forbidden to smoke on deck after nightfall, or to strike a match, and one of our dramatic companions insisted that he had heard that one of the naval gunners had pulled out his automatic pistol and threatened to kill a first

“ORDERLY!”

class passenger if he dared to strike a match once more. This boy had also heard that someone had been discovered tampering with the gunners' ammunition, and that the anonymous enemy was now in irons. All of this pleased the Scotch steward immensely.

One day the ship was stopped, soap boxes were thrown overboard, and the gunners practised their noisy instruments. A sharp, terrifying crack, a cloud of smoke and a spurt of fire were all we could notice, and whether any of the soap boxes were conquered, I never knew. The gunners we both respected and envied, for they were our only hope in case of attack, and they lived in comfortable quarters in the second class smoking room and ate beefsteaks.

Meanwhile, the days passed lazily and pleasantly, for it was a superb May sailing, with nothing but a gentle roll and blue waves to let us know that we were at sea. We were given uniforms in parts, one morning a pair of shoes, and that afternoon a campaign hat. In the course of a few days we were thus completely transformed into brown-green soldiers, and we

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

gave our old civilian clothes to the stokers who came up for air and sat with us on the stern of the deck. Every morning we were taken to any space on the ship wide enough for setting-up exercises, and every afternoon we had more right and left facing. Our meals were served to us in the third class dining room by waiters whose white coats became so spotted with filth after a few days that they seemed part of the menu, for both of them always contained orange marmalade. After supper we sat around in the third class dining room, smoked and talked of the war or of anything else. I remember listening to a putrid discussion of sex, and an equally putrid one of religion. Some of the men slept on deck, for the cabins were most of them hot and far down in the hold of the ship. Some were shamefacedly seasick. While visiting a friend in one of the hot cabins, I saw a green, grey face lying in an upper berth in a room without air or daylight. It belonged to the boy who could not about face. "What's the matter, M?" I asked sympathetically, "are you sick?" "I no seasick," he said

“ORDERLY!”

weakly, proud, “but I womit.” When we were not visiting one another or adjusting our new clothes, or eating, we just gazed over the barrier on deck which kept us at a proper distance from our officers and the nurses, who were dressed in trim blue serge uniforms, and among whom we were interested to discover which might be beautiful.

When we reached the Irish Sea, an American destroyer came out to meet us, and it gave a feeling of safety to everyone on the steamer, except the Scotch steward, who told me enthusiastically: “You’re not safe until you’re in the dock, and then you’re not safe; they sunk a ferry boat going between Liverpool and Belfast last week!” The destroyer kept crossing the bow of the *St. Louis* and furnished us with something additional to watch.

Gazing out at the horizon one afternoon, I saw a stick. I had heard of periscopes and felt certain that this was one. Never have I been so tensely frightened. I watched and waited for what I thought would be the terrific crash that meant our end. Finally, unable to endure the strain

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

any longer, I turned to my neighbour at the rail, who happened to be one of the regular army sergeants, whose walk still suggested the cavalry: "What's that?" I asked, breathless, and pointing. My face must have been a shade between grey and green, for he looked at me with good-humoured contempt and asked: "What's the matter with you?" I kept my feelings to myself and watched some more, until, as we came nearer, I realized that I had been looking at the mast of a fishing schooner.

When we awoke the next morning, the River Mersey was brown and muddy and covered with a mist, through which the sun penetrated quietly. Our ship was moving slowly up to Liverpool, whose enormous docks suddenly appeared out of the haze and gave us a sense of comfortable safety. A few days before, Captain E. had assembled us in the third class dining saloon and read us a lecture. He had exhausted the Army Regulations in New York, and therefore he was now constrained to draw upon his imagination. In Liverpool, he told us, we would find waiting for us upon the docks women in

“ORDERLY!”

black who would claim to be widows. They were not widows, he assured us, but venereal, and he warned us not to be sympathetic to the attempts he seemed to have wireless information that they would make upon our bright, young, pitying hearts. But, as we moved slowly into a dock, I could only see on the pavement beneath me men in khaki on crutches, a tiny scarlet mail wagon with the large letters G. R. in gold, straight British staff officers with impressive caps with bands of red and red tabs on their brown uniforms, trucks whose horses' hooves clattered comfortingly along the paving blocks. The misty sunshine lighted it all affectionately.

We stood, hanging over the rails of the ship, watching the sights and listening to the sounds, while our commanding officers held conferences with the impressive British staff officers. We were dressed carefully and fully as soldiers of Uncle Sam, but we were terrified by the knowledge that we knew nothing and the feeling that we represented Exhibit A of the army of the United States in Europe. Finally

20

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

we were lined up on the dock in two long lines, for our boat drill had not yet made us sure of the mechanics of forming fours, and our adjutant knew that he could only move us unerringly by shouting right or left face. We moved slowly off the dock in our two long lines, watched carefully by the British soldiers and anxiously by our own officers. In the streets of Liverpool the pavements were lined with hundreds of English men and women, most of whom cheered us because they were happy that Americans had at last arrived; some of the bystanders shouted at us, "Well, it's about time," and, "It took you long enough to get here," but to these remarks we paid no attention because each of us was too busy trying to keep himself and his neighbour in step, and we were all concerned with the responsibility to appear like real soldiers. Some muttered curses to those who could not seem to keep in step. It was a great nervous relief to reach the railroad station, where we could become individuals again, and where there were no people watching to see what American soldiers looked like.

“ORDERLY!”

England in May looked from our railroad carriages like a green and pleasant land. One little man who had been born in England and had left it very young to become an expert in X-rays became so excited that he bounced up and down in the compartment I was in and shouted: “Oh, boy, look at those hills! Did you ever see anything like it!” This exuberance disgusted a fat blond American who sat in the corner and insisted that it wasn’t patriotic to be so glad at seeing one’s native land. “After all, you’re an American now and in the American army,” he kept saying sententiously and with jealous disgust oozing out of his face. But this did not limit the joy of the tiny X-ray expert. The troop train moved very rapidly, and there was some bitter argument between the English native and the American concerning the relative speed of railways, which only ended as we approached a station and stopped. We still had no idea where we were going, and we kept looking eagerly out of the windows for signs on stations, but all of them seemed to be called “Bovril.” Finally the train stopped at Black-

22

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

pool, and we all got out. A British brass band was there to greet us, and our two long lines marched from the station to Albert Road to the tune of pleasant music, while people on the sidewalks waved at us and cheered us.

We stood in the middle of the road and waited to be assigned to boarding-houses by the British sergeants who had charge of quartering troops on the townspeople. Each of the houses in Albert Road was a small three story building, and all of them were filled with furniture of the horsehair school. Some of them had names in the windows, and I recall that Mrs. Pickup kept a house which she called "Seedling's Mount." I was told to go with some others to the next street and lunch at Mr. Parker's until we could be assigned our permanent quarters. Mr. Parker was standing on the doorstep, genial, matter-of-fact, and unshaven. He treated us as if he had known all along that we would be there some day, and he inquired anxiously if any of us came from Chicago. One of the men did, and Mr. Parker then said that surely he must know his cousin. "Parker,

“ORDERLY!”

same name as 'ere, same name as 'ere,” he kept repeating. Mrs. Parker and the slavey gave us a good meal while Mr. Parker ate and talked with us, and then we went to find our bedrooms in Albert Road.

Four of us were put in a room where the beds had the irregularity of rolling hills as seen from an airplane, but we were very happy to have beds, to be on land, and excitedly anxious to get out and walk about town. In my joy at seeing a new place I thought that Blackpool was the finest resort I had ever seen, and I remember committing myself to that effect in a letter home. Blackpool in war time was gay. It was the base of the Royal Army Medical Corps, so that the town was filled with soldiers waiting to be trained, being trained and waiting to be sent to France. Workingmen and girls came there on their holidays. There were meatless days and a limit to the amount of food one was permitted to buy in a restaurant; one was on one's honour not to come in again in five minutes with a false moustache and order another meal. Our boarding-house mis-

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

tresses were supposed to feed us, and they did, but bread and butter and tea in the evening were not enough for recently released barbarians, so that we spent much time in Fish & Chips shops and in restaurants, where large posters with a loaf of bread loomed down on us and urged us not to waste food and lose the war.

We all had money, and none of us had any responsibilities, so that the men proceeded to pair off conveniently with the servants in the houses or with girls who walked along the Esplanade. This was made easier by the fact that everyone was glad to see us. One old man came up to me along the Esplanade and tearfully congratulated me because President Wilson had decided to come into the war, and I accepted his congratulations on behalf of President Wilson. People felt more confident that they could beat the Germans because the United States had decided to help in that undertaking, and we, being among the first Americans to arrive in England, were accepted as the physical symbols of that event. Before we left Blackpool there had been an inordi-

“ORDERLY!”

nate exchange of inexpensive engagement rings, but I cannot recall a single instance of anyone who returned to be married.

We had very little work to do, so that there was plenty of time for sightseeing and for mischief. The sights were limited, but the mischief seemed to go on quietly and ribaldly forever. During the morning we were taken onto the wide, brown sand of the beach and drilled, while crowds of the transient population of the resort watched us politely, much to our shame. The sergeants entrusted with our instruction were very stupid, and we were very new. The sergeants spent long minutes arguing with each other over the regulation method of unfolding a regulation stretcher, while British army medical corps soldiers, townspeople and girls stood by silently and watched the signs of what the American army was like.

“I’ll betcha half a crown that I’m right,” Sergeant L. shouted irritably at Sergeant D., for we had already changed some of our money at the post office. Then they consulted that hateful little black book of drill regulations, which I was later

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

forced to study, and which I found second in dullness and incomprehensibility only to the text-book of intermediate algebra forced upon me in high school.

We did learn painfully and laboriously to form fours, and thereafter it was possible to march us by a given point in less time than it had taken the Grand Army of the Republic to walk down Pennsylvania Avenue. This was accomplished by constant drill every morning for a week.

Our afternoons and our evenings were our own. We spent them walking along the Esplanade or the beach, and in swimming. We also had our photographs taken by a lady photographer and sent them back to our families. She managed somehow to give us all the old-fashioned appearance of Spanish-American War veterans. One friend of mine developed a hitherto unsuspected interest in small boys, and he found two of them whose keen eyesight was being utilized by the British Navy to watch for periscopes from a high tower. My friend almost became engaged to both of them, and it all made me think of Pelléas and Mélisande. The

“ORDERLY!”

nights were white, and it did not begin to get dark until almost midnight, so that the Esplanade was crowded all evening with convalescent soldiers and their girls. Beside the breakwaters on the beach couples lay about without fear of public opinion, for it was all too apparent that bye and bye everybody might be dead, to make it worth while to consider any conventional commandments.

After a week of this exciting leisure, we started one evening for the railroad station. Following beside our lines of fairs were weeping girls clutching at the hands of their new *fiancés*, while the Royal Army Medical Corps band blared forth lugubriously. Those who were not trammelled by romance were cheerful at the prospect of going anywhere. The scene was a strange mixture of carefree joy and the sorrow of passing pleasure.

Eight of us were in each third class compartment, and our train did not start until after dark. Leaning on the window of the compartment I happened to be in, a British military policeman, who had been badly gassed at the front and was

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

therefore good only for the comparatively easy job of keeping Tommies in order at home, told me his expectation that he would not live for ten years. "This gas," he said, "makes you no good. You wake up in the middle of the night and cough, and lots of us get T.B." The recollection of this talk before the train moved slowly away brings to my mind the picture of thousands of men all over England and France and Germany waking in the middle of every night to cough, and of other thousands gradually reaping what had been sowed many years before by painful science. I can also hear again the ripped coughing of men whose throats were raw from the effects of mustard gas, as they lay in the long dark room where later I was on night duty.

In the compartment I tried to read G. K. Chesterton's "The Man Who Was Thursday," while a man who had taken it into his head to have all his hair shaved off in Blackpool boasted of anything and everything. He also ripped out a knife and tore off the new leather strap with which the window of the compartment was

“ORDERLY!”

raised and lowered. He had, as he did it, the triumphant air of a man who had already distinguished himself in the war, and he assured the rest of us that he now had a fine razor strop.

Later in the night the train stopped at a station, and women in Red Cross uniforms, who looked charming in the dim light of an unknown station, handed into the window sandwiches and coffee. Soon we all managed to fall into a doze by means of four men stretching out on each side of the compartment, each with his head on another's chest, except for the men in the farthest corners, who had the doubtful advantage of the wooden wall. I found it impossible to sleep much and yet too drowsy for "The Man Who Was Thursday." The Defense of the Realm Act forbade raising the blinds of the windows until daylight. In the grey light at dawn we pulled into Oxford station, and eagerly we searched for the spires of any of the University buildings, as we tumbled out of the compartments and drank some very tinny coffee at a canteen. It was impossible to see anything, so some of us sol-

30

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

emly spat on the station platform, that we might tell mythical grandchildren of that much contact with an ancient seat of learning.

Later in the morning we arrived at Southampton docks and sat all day among the salvage heaps of rusty guns and other decrepit material of war. When we got tired of eating what we could buy at the canteen, rummaging among the salvage heaps, talking, or gazing at the *Aquitania* off in the harbour, we slept, or wandered aimlessly from one part of the dock to the other.

As I passed two of our officers, who had not yet been stiffened by the rigidity of military fear, one of them said to me, "Do you know where you're going?" "No." "Mesopotamia," he said. "Good God," I answered and felt sick in the stomach. More sea, heat, dysentery and no France, were the thoughts which went rapidly through my weary brain. The officers laughed at the crushed expression I must have been wearing, and one of them said to the other: "Shall I tell him where we're going?" "Yes." "Etretat," the

“ORDERLY!”

lieutenant said, and that meant nothing to me, but it sounded more comforting.

Towards evening we went on a tender and were taken to a clean ship in the harbour, which turned out to be *H.M.S. Panama*, a hospital ship. Hundreds of comfortable canvas beds filled the centre of the ship, and in these we slept. Once more we felt pleasantly free as we wandered about the decks and watched the war activity of the harbour. Grey destroyers, which the setting sun lighted with cold slanting rays, were gathered in rows at the harbour entrance. An airplane flew around the harbour, and suddenly it fell into the water and turned on its wing. In an unbelievably short time another airplane was in the air, high enough to land properly on the water, and the capsized airmen had been picked up. It was all so much more exciting and calm than Columbia University, that I secretly, egotistically, thanked the happy fate that had made a war so that I might escape the trammels of home and the monotony of a college education.

We did not sail until dark, and large

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

British destroyers rode in front of us, while we slept soundly as the result of the fatigue of riding all night eight together. In the morning we were in Le Havre and eagerly watching the activities of the large hospital that jutted out from the quay, while our ship slowly approached a dock.

We marched along a dusty road for a distance that seemed neither long nor short and arrived at a collection of huts in a compound. Into one of the huts we were turned and found double-deck chicken wire bunks on a hard dirt floor. We put out our things on our pieces of chicken wire and joked about the impression of a tennis court which would be on our backs in the morning.

Scurrying about the compound, which was filled with British troops who were spending the night at the Rest Camp on their way to everywhere, we were very happy. There was a large Y. M. C. A. building, where there were old magazines, and a canteen, where there were cigarettes and food. Tommies sat about morosely, and the members of an Irish regi-

“ORDERLY!”

ment chaffed one another merrily. Later in the day the Y. M. C. A. hut was filled with Tommies, listening intently to an earnest and forceful lecturer who was offering a liberal view of religion. Suddenly, a puzzled face rose to the feet to which it belonged and asked the lecturer: “If all that you say is true, what about Adam and Eve?” He so evidently meant it that no one thought of laughing. The lecturer tried to explain, but I cannot recall how he was able to get out of the difficulty. After the lecture men applauded genially and left the hut with the contented faces of an audience at the end of a mediocre musical comedy: it had passed some time on the way to uncertainty, and no one could ask for more under the circumstances.

In the evening some of us took our food to the bank of a stream and sat in the grass, picnicking. Stretched out there in the grass, under the influence of a *douce* May evening, with no knowledge of the future and a relief from the past, I felt as content as I ever had in all the twenty years of my life.

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

Early the next morning we marched to a railroad siding and got into cars, some of them for 40 Hommes 8 Chevaux and others third class carriages. It was rumoured that we did not have far to go, but the engine was a toy engine, which made the shrill peep that was later to become such a familiar part of our consciousness, and it wandered slowly through lovely hilly country, where even the railroad embankments were under cultivation. The Normandy apple blossoms which had made the song writers famous were out in abundance, and the sun was soft and pleasing.

At about noon we arrived at Les Ifs, a junction between where we had come from and where we were going, and here we disembarked to wait for another train. Under the trees near the small railway station was an inn, where all of us hurried to buy cider and lunch. Captain E. was ignorant of French, and the one and only time I saw him humble was when he asked me to order him an omelette with jam. It hurt him to be dependent upon a private, and he was diffidently gruff, but he

“ORDERLY!”

recovered his military bearing as soon as he had finished his meal.

We sat under the trees and admired the waitresses, and those of us who had it tried out our high school French falteringly. Lazy hours passed, and finally our second train was ready to start. It too was a toy of the branch line, and it rattled down hill between rows of poplars, bumping into itself at every provocation, while we eagerly clung to the windows and fed our excitement and curiosity on every bit of evidence of the nature of the land in which we were to settle for an indefinite period.

It was about five-thirty in the afternoon when the train stopped at Etretat. A large, flat square of gravel in front of the station was crowded with British soldiers and officers, French small boys and peasants. The brass band, composed of hospital attendants, was there to greet us, and everybody seemed happy that we had arrived, but especially the ragged French boys, some of whom had milky films over at least one eye, while others looked diseased

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

in other ways. As we marched from the station into the town to the tune of the brass band, they ran by our sides in their long black cotton gowns and demanded appealingly: "*Sous, cigarettes; sous, cigarettes?*"

We drew up in a public square. Patients were hanging out of the windows in front of us, and others in the blue flannel uniforms with the brilliant red ties worn by convalescents surrounded the square. The British staff of the hospital was assembled, their buttons shining brightly on their green brown uniforms. The British commanding officer made a neat speech of welcome. The band played "God Save the King" and tried to play "The Star Spangled Banner," and we were marched to our living quarters. These were in a large brick building, formerly a French public school, where fifty *paillasses* were lying on the floor. There was also a wooden hut, where fifty more men were to sleep, and in the rear of both was a tin latrine. These structures were a mile from the hospital buildings, which were in peace time the leading hotels and the Casino.

“ORDERLY!”

We hurriedly deposited our belongings and rushed back towards the beach to see the town. The sky was now a reddish purple on a background of evening blue, and there was a proud exhilaration in the air, as if the night knew that it was to remain superb until it gently died. Walking on the pebbles of the half moon beach, I looked for the first time at a view that in all the twenty months I saw it day and night was never anything less than a miracle. Enclosing the wide half moon beach on either end was a cliff, but one's eye went naturally to the left, where a huge arched sandstone cliff grew out of the sea. A long, pointed needle of stone stood alone near the arch. Beneath the cliff were Marie Antoinette's 600,000 franc oyster beds, one of the minor causes of the French Revolution, and a factor in the fame of Etretat to this day; back of these the old fishermen's wives washed the filth from hospital sheets. On top of the magnificent arched cliff diminutive figures walked in the distance to or from an almost transparent golf club house.

Turning to the right, one saw at the

WALL STREET TO NORMANDY

end of the beach a large irregular wall of stone, which resembled the back drop of a scene from opera, except that it had natural depth and simplicity. This stone mass of rock went out into the water also and joined on land another cliff, on top of which patients looked like small pieces of blue flannel as they lay in the grass. A diminutive wooden church with a small steeple of grey stone rested comfortably in immensity so that one was merely pleasantly aware that it was there.

An esplanade was built up behind the beach on a concrete emplacement, and in back of this, on the right as one looked across the tranquil Manche, was a large hotel, now a hospital. Villas facing the sea completed another row in back of the esplanade until it met the public square where we had been welcomed. Then came the Casino, whose rooms were filled with patients in beds, and out in front of it on its stone walk more patients lay quietly watching the sea. To the left of the Casino was a row of fishing boats and covered tarred huts built to resemble boats, where

“ORDERLY!”

green nets, smelling of seaweed, were drying.

It seems impossible for me now not to compress what was really spread out in just the proper dimensions and to confuse what was really a simple variety of gorgeous beauty. I can merely record that the exhilaration of the scene was so powerful in that healthy, lifting air, that my companion and I could only gaze and gasp and give out such wholly inadequate exclamations as “Jesus Christ!”

II

CASINO FIVE

FOR a couple of days we were permitted to rest and to get acquainted with the town before our hospital work began. At six o'clock one morning we were awakened by a bugle, and we marched the mile to the hospital buildings before breakfast. I found that I was assigned to office work under the purple-faced sergeant in the Casino, and for several days I sat in a room with glass doors between the Salle de Baccarat, where the men wounded in the head were kept, and the Casino Reading Room, where miscellaneous wounded men lay and waited to get better. A combined septic and disinfectant smell continually seeped into the sea air. The British army soldiers who had been running the hospital for more than two years initiated the purple-faced sergeant and a man

“ORDERLY!”

who looked like Foxy Grandpa and myself into the details of British army forms. They terrified us with talk of convoys and evacuations. A convoy meant an ambulance train of new patients from the front, and it was this that we were always expecting with excitement and with dread.

Finally the first convoy arrived early one rainy morning. A sheet of paper ruled in squares and fastened on a board was handed to me, and I was told to squat down near the stretchers as they were unloaded on the stone walk in front of the Casino. To each wounded man a tag in a brown waterproof envelope was attached, and by consulting the tag and checking it via conversation with the patient, I was supposed to take what were called his “particulars.” These consisted of his name, regiment, regimental number, age, religion and diagnosis. It seemed easy, but it happened to be just the kind of work for which I was constitutionally unfit. Especially when excited, but even under normal circumstances, I was unable to write by hand either quickly or in any way so that others could read the result.

CASINO FIVE

Stretchers were being placed all around me, and each of them contained a man in more or less pain, whose patient face only made one all the more anxious to hurry. The sheets which I handed in as the result of my first attempts at this kind of work were so slowly compiled and so illegibly written that I received for my pain the just contempt, scorn and anger of the purple-faced sergeant, who asked sullenly: "Jesus Christ, can't you even write?" I trembled with humiliation, for I had not yet learned to admit even to myself that I could not write. Always I thought that a miracle would happen, and that somehow I would manage to write like other people. The result was that in less than a week the sergeant transferred me to Casino Five, the ward where the worst surgical cases in the hospital were kept. I felt as if I had failed completely in life, and my chagrin was deep as I walked to work the first morning after my humiliation; it was all the more miserable because it was just. Here was a sergeant whose general ignorance was so obvious that it had earned him the contempt of most of us, and yet

“ORDERLY!”

he was able to look down on me for intellectual reasons, for, after all, whatever his shortcomings, he could write by hand. I had been envied by some of the men because I had been assigned to office work, and now in less than a week of trial I was found useful only for manual, menial labor. The defect I had so quickly exhibited saved my life, for, had I been able to write by hand, I should have spent twenty months making out army forms, instead of which I was thrown into the thick of hospital work almost immediately.

Before enlisting in the army I had never been in a hospital in my life, even for a visit. After I had made up my mind to go to France with this hospital unit, my mental picture of the life I was destined to lead was this: I stood in a spotless white uniform, handing a bottle of brown medicine to a gorgeous nurse with a Red Cross cap; she would take it and say, “Thank you,” while a patient whose head would be bandaged after the manner of the first man on the left in “The Spirit of ’76,” would grin genially. Instead, I made my way disconsolately to Casino Five in leather leg-

CASINO FIVE

gins, brown flannel shirt, khaki uniform and a large felt campaign hat of a type which had proved useful many years before in protecting the troops stationed in the Philippine Islands from the warm sun.

The room into which I walked had been a small theatre before the war, and here the proprietors of the Casino d'Etretat had presented dramatic performances which did not require too deep a stage, and which would not draw audiences of more than two hundred people. On the stage now were a nickel sterilizer and a green gas burner, receptacles for pus-soaked bandages and blood-stained gauze, and a few beds. In the orchestra pit iron beds were arranged in regular rows, and in each bed was a wounded man, whose agony varied from the complicated seriousness of a fractured femur to the comparative simplicity of an amputated arm. In a dressing room back stage was a room where we orderlies kept our tooth-brushes and the piles of dirty sheets, towels, night-shirts and pajamas stripped each day from the beds in the audience. Adjoining this

“ORDERLY!”

room was a toilet, where we emptied the perpetual contents of bed-pans and urinals.

A dark-haired, good-humoured British corporal told me to get a pail of water, a scrubbing-brush, a bar of brown soap made from the remains of greasy food, and a rag. Then he pointed out a large square of floor space in front of the gas range and the sterilizer, and he suggested that I scrub it. I got down and put water on the floor ineptly and began to mop it up again. In my bewilderment I had forgotten entirely to use the soap and the brush. The corporal's eyes burned into my back the shame of my inefficiency as he watched from behind. Finally he said in the tone of voice of a judge who has arrived at his decision only after careful thought: "Werner, it's easy to see that you've never scrubbed a floor in your life." I confessed shamefacedly that my education had been sadly neglected, as my pitiful eyes pleaded for mercy, looking up at him from the pad on which my knees rested. Then he got down on his knees and with dexterous and vigorous strokes, he covered large areas

CASINO FIVE

of the floor with water, added plenty of soap to the worn scrubbing brush and described circles quickly, while I watched eagerly, feeling much as if I were privileged to witness a new Galileo demonstrating the secrets of the stars. "There," he said triumphantly, "that's the way to scrub a floor." I felt as if my ignorance had betrayed President Wilson, but his instruction had been so vivid that I proceeded immediately to follow his example, and every day thereafter for ten months I scrubbed floors satisfactorily.

After the four orderlies in the ward had scrubbed the various parts of the floor, the dirty linen had to be carted away. We took the huge bundles, tied in the cleanest available dirty sheet, on our backs to the disinfecting hut, where a man who had lived in Pittsburgh, and who had succeeded in getting into the army by skilfully hiding the fact that he could only see out of one eye, which he accomplished by stealing into the hospital in New York and memorizing the eye chart backwards, forwards, left and right, was being taught the mechanics of a large black boiler with an

“ORDERLY!”

iron cradle, into which he dumped the bundles that we dumped on him. Then two of us went to a two-storey stone building with a veranda, over which was painted: “Bains de mer; Hydrotherapie; Pedicure,” and various similar announcements. We presented our lists and were given an equivalent number of clean clothes for those dirty ones we had just handed in. We were not permitted to put bloody sheets in the laundry, for the old French women who washed the dirty linen down near the oyster beds could not endure the sight of blood. Blood-stained sheets were soaked in a pail of water, and in the sunny afternoons, as soon as we had time from our other duties, two of us took the pail, which looked like melted strawberry mousse, down to the beach, and dancing merrily on the round pebbles we wrung out the sheets, glad of the chance to get out of the ward for a few moments and to listen to the waves kissing the pebbles instead of the urgent cries of “Orderly! a bed-pan!”

When the scrubbing, dusting and polishing were finished, the doctors arrived to

CASINO FIVE

dress the patients' wounds. Sometimes we stood by and handed things to nurses, who handed them to doctors, and sometimes we were called from our other work to lift patients without arms or legs, or with so many holes in various parts of their bodies that they would not move themselves. One of these patients in Casino Five, a man named Hughes, had been playing with a Mills bomb in a trench for the amusement of himself and his companions during one of the long periods of unbroken waiting, of which war largely consists. The pin dropped out and blew his friends to so many pieces that they were never recognized again, and Hughes received two gashes on each thigh, two long rips on each arm, and slight, but painful abrasions on the face. He had been lying in bed so long that his back was covered almost completely with bulbous, red bedsores. Whenever his bowels moved it took five of us to raise him gently as possible and remove the result, while he screamed with pain and assured himself that he was going to die. Sometimes I held him under the armpits while the surgeon

“ORDERLY!”

got near his more obscure wounds with a swab of medicated liquid soap, and all the time he howled in pain and insisted that he was going to die. The doctor told him that it was not so and urged him to have courage, and the doctor really believed that he could live. But once a man had come to the private conclusion that he was going to die, it was very difficult for him to muster sufficient resistance to enable him to live. As I held Hughes's shoulders, on top of which was his scrubby, grey face, I faced the quiet sea and saw gentle waves lapping at pebbles while the gorgeous cliff lazily changed its complexion in the sunlight. I remember, too, that Private D., one of the men with whom I worked, offered to bet me a franc that Hughes would be dead by the time we returned to duty at five o'clock in the afternoon; I took the bet, and Private D. won.

After we had finished our early morning cleaning, two of us walked back to the barracks to breakfast, while the other two waited hungrily for the first two to return. We had our breakfast in a building that had been a garage before the war,

CASINO FIVE

and, under an enormous skylight at long unpainted tables placed on the cracked stone floor, we ate the round ball of petrified bacon, the square chunk of white bread, and the tin plate full of knotted porridge. These things, together with a tin cup full of tea which was made in a huge cauldron and stirred with a stick, we obtained in the rear of the garage, where a large iron stove was commanded by a man who had been in the army for twenty years. He was officially a cook, and with the materials at their disposal, he and his assistants did their work as well as possible. However, floor scrubbing, walking a mile to and from work and again to and from breakfast, carrying stretchers to the operating rooms, and lifting bags of laundry or dead bodies, made us hungry and healthy, so that at about eleven o'clock in the morning we had to exercise all our self-control and humanity in order to prevent ourselves from stealing bread which was meant for patients, whose meals were no more extensive and no more delicate than our own.

During the morning we carried men on

“ORDERLY!”

stretchers to the operating room and called for them after the surgeons had removed a piece of shrapnel or adjusted a disrupted organ. We placed our stretchers with their load of disturbed flesh on the floor outside the operating room, where, at times when the doctors and nurses had many operations, the nurse administered the anaesthetic kneeling down over the patient's stretcher. After the operations we called for our patients again, and we had to be careful that on the way from the table to their beds, they did not swallow their tongues and choke to death. We were taught the simple pressure of the thumb on the throat which prevented this catastrophe.

When the men were coming out of ether, they sometimes behaved strangely. Some of them remembered the war vividly, and some of them remembered their wives intimately; some of them laughed hysterically, and some of them bawled like huge, obscene babies. I remember one man in ether who wept loudly and repeated: “*I want the ugly-faced nurse; I want the ugly-faced nurse; I want the ugly-*

CASINO FIVE

faced nurse." Finally, the nurses all lined up before his bed in the effort to restore satisfaction and quiet. As they passed before his anaesthetized vision, he dismissed them one after the other until he discovered the one he had in mind, whose face was rather ugly. "Come here," he shouted at her happily, and when she approached his bed, he threw his arms about her neck and kissed her. A large New Zealander who had been on the operating table for an hour and a half while the doctors hunted for a foreign body in his bladder and did not find it, demanded a cigarette as soon as we got him back in bed. Two huge glass bottles were standing on either side of his bed, and india rubber tubes connected these with his hidden organs, thus enabling them to discharge the brown and yellow liquids with which they were filled. A gentle orderly tried to explain that he could not have a cigarette just now. The man looked viciously up into the face bent over his and shouted: "*You*, you tell me what's killed bloody Germans and bloody Turks that *I* can't have a cigarette, — you!" The orderly

“ORDERLY!”

tried to calm him, but he rose in bed with such violence that the glass bottles trembled on the floor, and he managed to hurl a blue sputum cup in the direction of the well-meaning orderly. A sweet-tempered nurse then bent over him and said: “ Now, dear, you can’t have a cigarette just yet; in a little while.” “ *You*,” he bellowed into her face, “ *you* tell me what’s killed bloody Germans and bloody Turks that I can’t have a cigarette, — you! ” I looked out of the window at the sea, for I was twenty years old and could still blush. Then nurse and orderly tried anger on the New Zealander, who was becoming more savage and more profane every minute, and this succeeded only in making him more violent. The noise attracted one of the doctors who had just operated on the man. “ What’s the matter? ” he asked, as he came running into the ward in his white operating gown, expecting at least a haemorrhage. “ Well, give him a cigarette,” the doctor ordered, and peace was once more restored, while the New Zealander sat sullenly triumphant and puffed all the afternoon.

CASINO FIVE

All along the stone walk under the iron awning of the Casino were the beds of wounded men who needed sunlight and air. I have walked by this place on a fine summer morning when the sea and the cliff were at their best and have heard the terrifying howls of pain that came from some of the worst cases when their wounds were being dressed. Each cry was a stab in the nerves, for I have never heard anything so sharp as the yell of a strong man in pain; even the doctors winced and sometimes had to make an effort to keep their forceps steady when the screams came forth. One of the surgeons always shouted "Shut up!" very sternly at his head cases, if they yelled while he was fixing up their brains. This earned him a reputation for cruelty, but he explained one day that if he permitted a patient to yell, he would yell continuously, thereby increasing his own pain and making delicate work impossible under the circumstances; when he reprimanded them, they were silent. All along the esplanade of the Casino men were lying with their broken legs hitched at varying angles from their bodies to

“ORDERLY!”

wooden frame works attached with pulleys and sandbags. The doctors, turned carpenters for the occasion, worked hard to construct the complicated devices necessary to make the bones set properly.

All through our varied activities was a motif of bed-pans and urinals, and we served these continually to the men who demanded them, while we were on our way to and from our other tasks. A pair of screens, red cotton of the kind used in children's box kites, meant one of four things: behind those screens a man's bowels were moving, he was receiving holy communion from the padre, he was having an enema, or he was dying. The wards being open, it was considered advisable that other wounded men should not see their neighbours die, and as soon as a patient began the heavy breathing which marked the beginning of a possible end, we placed our red screens around his bed and served him behind them. The patients in the near-by beds knew, of course, what this meant, for they could tell death from an enema by the difference in time the

CASINO FIVE

screens remained, and their faces took on a pathetic, dreamy silence as they watched us put up our lugubrious screens, whose ironic brightness was created by the color of blood.

One of the first men I watched die — I had never seen a dead person before I arrived at the hospital — was eighteen years old and slight. He had come into the hospital with a mild illness and a small dot in back of his left ear, which developed presently into both mastoiditis and spinal meningitis. A trench had been cut behind the ear so that every morning Captain C. might explore the dirty grey recesses of the brain with a forceps, while I held the patient and prevented him from destroying himself in his agony. During the rest of the day he had to be watched, for he frequently tried in his delirium to jump from his bed, and while watching him it was necessary deftly to avoid the spit which came in angry spurts from his small, loose mouth, for meningitis, I was told, was contagious. He demanded his gun, he had visions of going over the tops of trenches and of killing other men, and fi-

“ORDERLY!”

nally he struggled so in his quiet bed, that, though he weighed very little and was only about five feet five in height, we had to tie him with sheets to the mattress. The stench of his breath was almost unbearable, and I lighted one cigarette on another during my death watch, until Captain E., the man of “Death, or as the court martial may direct,” and the same who imagined the attractive widows of Liverpool, happened to come into the ward, for he had nothing to do but discipline us, and we were too busy during the day for much mischief. He roughly insisted that I must not smoke, that I ought to know enough not to smoke on duty, and he threatened varied punishments until his face became redder than the whisky tinge it usually wore. A lovely nurse defended me on the grounds of the stink, but he implied that it was none of her business. After that we continued to smoke while Private Smart died, to avoid the smell of his decay, but we took turns watching to see whether Captain E. was approaching in the rounds of his endeavour to make himself useful.

CASINO FIVE

Captain E. probably meant well, but his education had been received in the regular army, where rules were inflexible. He would have preferred to see the Allies lose the war unless they won it in regulation fashion, and he would have preferred to see us all asphyxiated rather than smoking on duty. His ignorance of medicine and surgery was abysmal, although, being an officer in the medical corps, he had the necessary degree of doctor of medicine. I have seen him watching an operation for haemorrhoids with the same fascinated gaze of the amateur which I myself was bestowing on the grape-like clusters the young doctor was cutting from the sleeping patient's rectum. I would rather have faced a row of German trenches than an operating knife in the hand of Captain E., for there was some chance that the Germans might slip in the wrong direction, whereas there seemed no possibility that Captain E. could cut in the right way. This may have been an unfounded prejudice, but it had the power of an instinctive belief.

At about noon two of us walked back

“ORDERLY!”

to the garage for lunch, while the other two waited for their return. If the hospital was not too crowded with patients, or if an ambulance train had not arrived that day, the two men who went to lunch last remained off duty until five o'clock in the afternoon, when they returned and relieved their fellow orderlies until seven o'clock in the evening, when the night staff came on duty. When we were on duty in the afternoons, we swept the floors with long-handled brooms and collected the dirt in dustpans, and we helped the nurses to make the beds of the fifty men in the ward and to clean their backs with alcohol and powder. For the rest we did much as we did in the mornings, carried patients on stretchers to the X-ray room or the operating tables, but usually the afternoon was calmer, and then we had time to sit on their beds with the patients and talk with them about themselves or the war, until we were called away by the demand for a bed-pan or a glass of water. The tin bed-pans with their sloping ends, manufactured to fit snugly under the behind, became an indelible part of our lives, for

CASINO FIVE

no matter what other variety in our work, these, with the differences in colours, textures and stench of their contents, went on forever.

A convoy was the most dramatic event in our lives. As soon as the beds began to empty after men had been sent to England, back to the front, or after they had been what the records called "discharged by death," we could expect another ambulance train filled with new personalities smashed in other ways. We looked forward to this inevitable event and also dreaded it, for while it meant excitement it also meant a terrific increase in our work. We never knew exactly when a convoy would arrive, but as the beds in our wards became empty, there was an air of expectancy and a large increase in rumour, for spiritually we lived entirely upon rumour. About twenty-four hours before the arrival of an ambulance train a telegram would reach the hospital, of which the following is a sample:

"Ambulance Train Number 23 loaded 4th Army left Templeux at 12 hours for Etretat.

“ORDERLY!”

	<i>Lying</i>	<i>Sitting</i>
British Officers	13	7
British Other Ranks	194	82
British Nursing Sister	1	—
U. S. A. Other Ranks	6	4
British West Indian Other Ranks	—	1
Chinese Other Ranks	1	—
German Officers	1	—
German Other Ranks	2	3
Totals: Lying	218	
Sitting	97	
	315	

As soon as the ambulance train was heard coming into the railroad station one of the men stationed there would wake the bugler, who would wake us. Some of us hurried to the station as soon as we could dress, and the others went to their wards. Usually the trains arrived at two or three o'clock in the morning. I liked being assigned to the station because the activity there was hectic, and one felt alive. I remember walking often to the station at three o'clock in the morning in a thin rain, along the quiet, hilly roads of the town. Occasionally a dog would bark, and the

CASINO FIVE

only other sounds were our heavy boots on the roads. We did not march together, for each man left the barracks as soon as he was dressed. Usually we were still sleepy and hungry, but we woke up during the mile walk to the station and forgot that we had not had anything to eat. The stretchers were unloaded onto the stone station platform under the dim blue grey lamps which lighted parts of it. We climbed into the trains and took the wounded and sick out of their canvas berths on stretchers. They had been riding for more than twenty-four hours from the Casualty Clearing Station about five miles from the front, and frequently they were exhausted, and sometimes one or two of them were dead. This, however, was rare, for a man was not put into the ambulance train if it was suspected that he was going to die. The jogging of the slow train all night must have been agony for those who were badly wounded, but by the time they reached us they had already suffered so much, and were so glad to be going back instead of forwards, that they were resigned to the torture they could not avoid.

“ORDERLY!”

After wounded men had been picked up at the front, or had managed somehow to get back to where they could be picked up, field ambulance attendants bandaged their wounds hurriedly and gave them an anti-tetanus inoculation. A large T painted in iodine on their foreheads testified to the fact that they had already been inoculated against tetanus. Sometimes the hurry was so great at the front that the bandages were worse than useless. After one big drive when time was limited, a patient who came into the ward where I happened to be working had his mud-caked, lousy khaki bandaged into the raw gash made in his thigh by a large hunk of shrapnel. It took me an hour with a pair of scissors and a bottle of lysol to cut away the tenacious, stiff, dirty brown cloth, and to remove slowly, but with great pain to the patient, those parts which clung to the wound by moistening them with the disinfectant and pulling them out as gently and gradually as possible, stopping every minute to give the man rest from his pain.

From the time they had been shot by a bullet from a rifle, stabbed by a bayonet

CASINO FIVE

or smashed by a piece of shrapnel or a bomb until the time when they reached us, the men had been suffering for more than a week. After they had been attended to hurriedly by the field ambulance men, they had been driven over shelled roads to the Casualty Clearing Station, which was a collection of large tents and huts, into which as many as seven thousand men poured each day. Here, if there happened to be time and space, the wounded were washed and put into beds, but if too many patients had arrived, they remained lying on stretchers, dirty and patient, unless they happened to need immediate operations to save their lives.

The Casualty Clearing Stations were frequently bombed by airplanes, and operations were performed during air raids by the light of covered flashlights held by nurses and orderlies so that the doctors might see what they were cutting and yet concealed sufficiently from the world to hide from an aviator that here lay a place to hit. In these huge compounds of tents the orderlies worked as we never worked at the base hospitals, for time was

“ORDERLY!”

precious, and the wounded arrived faster than they could be attended to. One of our officers who did duty at a Casualty Clearing Station for a couple of weeks told me that he was operating one night on a man's leg and could not find immediately the bleeding artery that was causing a haemorrhage. "Take off the leg," the commanding officer of the operating room ordered. "But, Colonel, if you give me some time I can save it," the surgeon protested. "But, if I give you time I've got three men out here on the floor who will die, and maybe this one will die too. He's better without a leg than that all of them should be dead."

Usually the patients were not sent down to us until we had beds to put them into, or until they could travel in the ambulance trains without danger of their death, but after periods of heavy fighting they were sent down in any numbers and in any condition. During the Battle of the Somme, two years before we had arrived, the number of British wounded was so great that they were lying all over the streets of Etretat on stretchers, as well

66

CASINO FIVE

as in the kitchens and in the orderlies' beds, while the orderlies slept in the fields, for every mattress was needed.

The large automobile ambulances, with room for four stretchers or for about twelve patients who could sit up, lined up in front of the exit to the railroad station. English girls, some of them so beautiful that one forgot one was carrying a stretcher when approaching their ambulances, drove the cars; some of them married our officers. We would pick up the stretchers, carry them as rapidly as possible to the ambulances and raise them above our heads to place them in the upper racks, or slide them as quickly and as gently as possible into the lower racks. The object was to do the job with the least possible agony to the patient and the greatest possible speed. It was considered disgraceful to drop a stretcher, and this very rarely happened. I remember doing it once, and that was in the hallway of one of the hospital buildings, when my partner on the other end of the stretcher forgot to warn me that I was backing into another stretcher. I tripped and dropped

“ORDERLY!”

my end, giving an extra twinge of pain to a man who had a gunshot wound in the left buttock. I was terrified and turned white, for I was sure that I had killed him, but he only smiled and insisted that it had not hurt, and I could only console myself with the facts that the buttocks are usually fleshy and gunshot wounds were often deeply imbedded in them.

We sometimes held our stretchers for some minutes while the officers in charge of the distribution of patients told us which ambulance to place them into, depending on which hospital building they were intended for, and this in turn depended upon the kind of wound the patient had or the kind of illness he was suffering from. I remember one convoy when we received a British Major-General. We had never had such a high officer before, and all of us looked at him with curiosity. He was slightly indisposed, and next to his stretcher stood his own batman, rigid as only a British Tommy who is the servant of a Major-General can be. The General's stretcher was held at the feet by a small boy from Texas, and the

68

CASINO FIVE

head was in the hands of a huge man, also from Texas. The General was lying on his stretcher with one arm perched under his head, watching the operations of the orderlies with interest. His staff cap was brilliant with red ribbon, and the chest of his brown uniform was lighted with three rows deep of service medals and distinguished orders. "Where'll we put this bird," sang out the tall Texan languidly. The General sat up on his stretcher. "What did he call me?" he asked his servant. "Bird, Sir — Bird, Sir — Bird, Sir," answered the Tommy, drawing himself up and saluting with perfect regulation rigidity before each answer. It was too much, even for a General, and he laughed. One of the British officers once said to me: "I like you Americans, but — eh, you're so breezy!"

After the train had been emptied and the stretchers placed in the ambulances, we hurried to the hospital buildings to help the other orderlies stationed there to take care of the new patients. Those patients who had only slight wounds in the arm or other mild troubles walked to the

“ORDERLY!”

hospital buildings, but as many of them as there was room for rode on the front seats of the ambulances beside the beautiful drivers.

As soon as we had received a telegram announcing the arrival of an ambulance train, orderlies and nurses busily opened up all the empty beds, turning the blankets and upper sheet to one side in a neat roll. We placed a blanket over the under sheet, and when the patients arrived, we helped them onto this blanket with one hand while holding the stretcher firmly against the bed with the other, unless he could move himself into bed. Then we covered the patient with the ends of the blanket, while he waited until we had time to scrub him, for the beds were clean and must not become muddy or lousy. If a patient was too badly wounded to wash himself, we scrubbed his face and hands and body thoroughly, pulled the dirty blanket from under him, put him in a nightshirt and rolled the bed clothes over him and tucked them in. This process kept up with monotonous regularity until all were finished, and it was usually pleasant

70

CASINO FIVE

work, for the men were so grateful for the attention and so glad to be safe in clean beds. Then we usually gave the patients washy tea in tin, chipped blue pannikins and knotty porridge in tin, chipped plates.

The eternal round of bed-pans, operations, urinals and X-rays then began, and our cleaning activities were usually postponed until they could be fitted in between the demands of new patients. After a convoy had arrived, the hospital was busy and exciting for many days. Our work went on steadily and rapidly from the early morning when the trains usually arrived, until seven at night when the night force came to work. There were new faces in the beds and new diseases and wounds behind the faces. Sometimes nationalities and races changed, but most of the patients had lived all their lives in the British Isles. Occasionally large, swaggering Australians filled the beds, and their accents were more Yankee than a Yankee's. A few Portuguese, some South Africans, and several Ghurkhas arrived. I remember trying anxiously to find out what a Ghurkha, whose brown face showed pain, required.

“ORDERLY!”

I tried him in English and in broken English, with no result; he was smoking a cigarette, and he already had had a bed-pan. Finally I tried him in French, and for some reason this worked, and I discovered that he wanted his pillow straightened. After they recovered, the Ghurkhas, tall, straight and brown, walked about the beach in their silver grey turbans looking calm and dramatic. They were said to be extraordinary fighters and to be ignorant of the rules of fighting etiquette formulated in unwritten codes by white men. I have heard of Ghurkhas who cut off the ears of their German victims and wore them as necklaces until ordered to remove them by their British officers — but then these were the sort of tales which the men who had nothing to do in 'bed loved to embroider for our edification.

The Australians were frequently fresh and unafraid. They received more pay than any other soldiers in France, they wore uniforms of better material, and one of the conditions their government had made before sending them to France was that under no circumstances could an

CASINO FIVE

Australian be shot for any offense whatsoever. The severest punishment an Australian could receive was a long jail sentence, and he knew that he would receive the King's pardon after the war. The result was that they were undisciplined and did as they pleased. It was also said that thousands of deserters from the Australian ranks were wandering about the highlands of Scotland waiting for the war to end. If they were caught, they went gladly to jail, which was safer than the front. They were also credited with unusual, reckless courage. Receiving from their government more than forty dollars a month, while the British Tommies received a shilling a day, the Australians were able to buy the best girls, the best food and the best drink. This caused friction in the base towns between the forces of the Empire.

Sometimes we received a few German prisoners who had been wounded, and they were so happy to be away from the war that they worked very hard for us cleaning streets and shovelling coal as soon as they were able to get out of bed. They were guarded by one of our men, who car-

“ORDERLY!”

ried no other weapon than a cane, and he did not even need that, for the German prisoners preferred the ease of our existence to the rigours of defending the Fatherland. We treated them well, and we tried to keep them with us as long as possible, for the more German prisoners we had at the hospital, the less coal shovelling, street cleaning and unloading of freight trains filled with heavy bags of flour and kerosene tins, we did ourselves. But the British War Office was very angry with us when we kept them longer than necessary for their cure, because they were supposed to be locked up in prison camps.

Most of the patients, however, spoke with thick Lancashire or Yorkshire accents, which were incomprehensible to us. Most of them had bad teeth, or practically none at all, and many of their bodies had been so badly created and so badly cared for throughout their lives, that it was difficult to understand how they had managed to survive the strain of hardships in the trenches. One was continually amazed at the endurance of the human animal, for most of the soldiers managed to go

CASINO FIVE

through bullets, rain, lice, frost, heavy manual labor and stern discipline on food that was worse than any ever encountered in civilian life. On the other hand, some men were receiving three meals a day regularly for the first time in their lives.

Next to a convoy our most hectic activity was an evacuation. After they were in a condition when they could be moved, the more serious cases were sent to Le Havre in our ambulances, to be taken from there in a hospital ship to England. It was this gift of the medical officers for which all the patients longed, and it was known among them as "getting a Blighty." The alternative to it was absolute cure of their wounds or diseases, and that meant that they would be sent to a convalescent camp in Le Havre for a short time and then back to rejoin their regiments at the front. During the twenty months we were in France about sixty thousand patients passed through our hospital. I never met one who would not have done anything to avoid returning to the front, and I only heard of one who said that he was anxious to return there, and he

“ORDERLY!”

was subsequently transferred to No. 2 General Hospital in Le Havre, where the huge numbers of mental cases were cared for. Part of our duty was to prevent the patients from putting the thermometers in their tea, because they knew that so long as they had temperature they would remain at the hospital, and many thermometers were broken by patients who lit matches under them while the nurse had her back turned and was feeling a neighbouring pulse. The excuses the soldiers devised in order to remain in hospital longer or to get to England were sometimes ingenious, and the doctors had to learn to be cruel detectives in order to catch those who were what they themselves called “swinging the lead.” I watched one man in the Royal Garrison Artillery pretend for weeks that he was deaf as the result of the noise made by the big guns he fondled at the front, and every day he went diligently for treatment of his ears. When he returned to the ward, I would whisper: “Pitcher, do you want a bottle of stout?” His face would shine with pleasure. This same soldier had de-

CASINO FIVE

veloped an eczema on the face, and one morning as he came into the ward, carrying two tin basins of water — for those who wished to remain a long time helped us with our cleaning — he passed the doctor, who was standing near a sterilizer in which rubber gloves were being boiled. “How’s your face this morning, Pitcher?” the doctor asked. “Smells like rubber burning, Sir, don’t it?” said Pitcher as he sailed by with his basins of soapy water. The doctor laughed, and we kept Pitcher a few weeks longer.

The men who were going to England were men whose wounds would take a long time to heal, and we needed their beds in the hospital. They were dressed in old uniforms, for all their clothes had been taken away and disinfected when they arrived, and they looked more inept than ever in the wrinkles of their cheap khaki. An evacuation was gayer and less tense than a convoy. The men wrapped in blankets on stretchers were happy as they waited their turn to be put into the ambulances. They were going where they would see friends and families again, and

“ORDERLY!”

where they would be away from bullets and lice. Some of them were very sorry to leave the hospital, for people formed rapid and intense attachments under the circumstances, and both the nurses and the orderlies used to receive letters from men who had been happy for some weeks at Etretat. They usually swore life-long friendship and asked to be remembered to others, but soon the burdens of correspondence grew too much, and one never knew whether favorite patients were back at the front, limping about England, or dead, and one seldom cared, for new cases demanded most of one's energy and attention, and relaxation was usually obtained not by personal attachments to patients, but by drinking, walking, bicycle riding and personal attachments to nurses, to other orderlies or to “Shrapnel Kate” and the other women of the town.

After we had been managing the hospital for about six months, some one suddenly realized that it was rather silly for us to get up at six o'clock and march to the hospital without breakfast, and then after

CASINO FIVE

an hour to go back again the mile from the hospital to the barracks for breakfast. It wasted time, and we got enough exercise in our work. The same genius also discovered that on days when we were not too busy, it would be better for half the orderlies to have the entire afternoon off duty, instead of from one o'clock until five o'clock. This new arrangement gave us some leisure, but it did not mean that we had every other afternoon to ourselves, for there was drill for an hour in the large field near the Y. M. C. A. Here we were taught how to carry stretchers in the regular army manner. We were carrying stretchers every day of our lives, but that did not seem to matter to Captain E., who insisted that we must bring out the dozen regulation American Army stretchers, of a type which we never used at the hospital. We stood in the field, dumb and terrified, while the brusque Captain E. and his stupid sergeants told us what to do and then tried to make us do it successfully. We also had to practise lifting fictitious wounded men from the ground and placing them on stretchers in regulation fashion. We were

“ORDERLY!”

lifting real wounded men daily, but this little game was quite different from the reality. The rules of the game were designed to make everything easier for the bearer, but unfortunately they did not take into consideration the fact that wounded men were wounded in different places, and that it would have been rather clumsy to grasp a man around the waist if he happened to have a huge, raw tear in that vicinity. However, we learned thoroughly how to do the proper motions, and never once used them.

Sometimes when we did not have to go to drill, we had to go to funerals. Every soldier who died in the hospital was accompanied to the grave by twenty men, a non-commissioned officer and an officer, besides the padre who recited the service. The War Office was particularly anxious that each soldier should be buried by the proper priest, and as most of them belonged to the Church of England, familiarly known as C. of E., that padre had most of the business. When men began to die, the priests, of whom there were three attached to the hospital, C. of E., Pres-

80

CASINO FIVE

byterian and Roman Catholic, were informed, and they paid visits to the dying men. We placed our red cotton screens around the bed while the appropriate padre prayed for the eternal salvation of a disappearing soul. If a patient happened to be a Jew, a Wesleyan or a Primitive Methodist, as sometimes happened, he was comforted by the Presbyterian padre, who dealt in miscellanea.

After a patient died, the padre was informed, and at about two o'clock in the afternoon of the following day, twenty of us who happened to be free from duty, were lined up in the public square near the Casino. We marched loosely to the Morgue, a small wooden hut. The front half of this building was fitted up for religion, and it was separated from the back half by a purple curtain with a large white cross. The few simple implements of religious ceremony were spread out on a table, also covered with a purple cloth. Behind the purple curtain was a huge autopsy table, and other tables, cluttered with the alembics and test tubes and knives of science. Here Captain P. per-

“ORDERLY!”

formed an autopsy on every patient who died. He cut open the skull and took out the contents of the head, cut open the chest and took out the lungs, heart and other organs residing there, and then he was able to tell the surgeon in charge of the case where he had made his mistakes, if any. After this operation was finished, the corpse was stuffed with straw and old copies of the Paris edition of the *New York Herald*.

By the time we arrived for the last rites, the body had been nailed into a clean pine box, and a British flag covered the coffin. Six of us went into the Morgue to get the coffin, while the rest of us remained at rest outside. As soon as the coffin appeared at the whitewashed door of the Morgue, the sergeant shouted “Attention!” and we straightened into rigid military sorrow. The coffin was placed on a rubber-tired stretcher carriage, and two of us pulled it slowly and sorrowfully through the Rue Alphonse Karr, past the barber, the stationery store, and the shop of Renée, the full blown *patissière*, while the other men marched in slow march behind the

82

CASINO FIVE

stretcher carriage. The fisherfolk and the other townspeople whom we happened to pass on the way looked very sad, removed their caps and crossed themselves. They had seen this sight several times a week for the past three years, but they never once failed to be impressed sadly.

When we had passed the main streets of the town on the way to the cemetery, we were commanded to march in quick step, and the *cortège* became more efficient and less impressive and lugubrious. As we approached the fine Norman church, its one simple, square tower welcomed us solemnly. Here we slowed down again, and came to a halt on the gravel at the entrance to the cemetery. Six of us removed the coffin from its carriage and lifted it onto our shoulders. The pall-bearers proceeded in advance through the civilian part of the French cemetery, where faded ribbons and stiff wax figures under glass adorned the graves of the families of the townspeople. We followed in slow march along the gravel path, our boots crunching soberly. One large plot of ground, with plenty of room for expansion, had been

“ORDERLY!”

purchased by the British government for its military graves, and a middle-aged British soldier, who was physically unfit for service at the front, had the job of digging the graves. When the job of keeping four graves always ready got too much for him, some of us were assigned to help him.

The coffin, still draped in the Union Jack, slightly worn after three years, was placed beside the open earth, and then the padre read his service, while we stood in the quiet churchyard with our heads appropriately bowed, wondering when it would all be over, so that we might have the rest of the afternoon for our pleasures. At first funerals impressed and saddened everyone, but no one could be impressed by the same sight and the same speech every week. The Church of England padre always said that this mortal had taken on immortality, and that this corruption had taken on incorruption. “Inasmuch as by an act of war the Lord has seen fit to take from us our dearly beloved comrade, let us pray,” he chanted monotonously, and then we lowered our heads even lower and tried

CASINO FIVE

to think of something besides how we were going to spend the rest of the afternoon. Up on the hill near the railroad station a hen clucked clearly in the fine summer air, or the voices of French children playing in the distance came pleasantly into the service. Sometimes while forming part of this scene I could not help wondering what an alleged God would think when he received these mutilated bodies, whose utter emptiness was stuffed with the Paris edition of the *New York Herald*, and whether he would be interested in reading that Lady Bottomly Upwards gave a tea for Mr. and Mrs. Wrinklebelly at her home in the Avenue Victor Hugo, or that Mr. Simon Gulch, of Philadelphia, was stopping at the Hotel Pallas Athenée for a few days.

After the padre had finished chanting, the coffin was lowered into the fresh earth, but not before a British grave-digger had hastily snatched the Union Jack from its cover. The padre took a handful of clean brown dirt and a thud fell on the still air as he dropped it onto the wooden box: "Ashes to ashes; dust to dust . . ." When

“ORDERLY!”

he had finished his last words, the bugler raised his bugle and the beautiful quiet was pierced with the thrilling notes of the twirling British Last Post. This part of the ceremony never once failed to send cool waves down my spine. The whole surrounding countryside seemed stilled as the clear silver notes came calmly and efficiently from the brass bugle.

Then we marched in quick time back to the public square and were left to our own resources for the rest of the afternoon. The return from the cemetery was always lively, and sometimes even gay. We could not help it. Death was too frequent and too anonymous to impress us for long, and our own desires were always with us.

Sometimes a patient's relatives were at the funeral, and then the scene was always heart-tearing. If a man had been dying for a long time, and the doctor thought that it might help to save his life if his mother or father or sister visited him, a telegram was sent to the War Office in London, and the relative was sent out on a hospital ship. All their expenses were paid, and they were given rooms in the British Y. M. C. A.

CASINO FIVE

I have seen them often sitting by the beds of their sons in the afternoon sunlight. I remember one young boy, Lance-Corporal Allan, whose legs were so thin and whose chest so slight that one felt as if one were lifting a bag of leaves, as one raised him higher on his pillows. He had been dangerously ill from a wound for months, and it was thought that the presence of his mother might do him some good. She came out—a short, portly woman in black satin. She brought him small gifts every day and was sure that he would recover. Her wails at the cemetery formed huge lumps of grief in our throats.

When a relative was present for a funeral, the brass band was brought out, and it played Chopin's Funeral March as we walked in slow time behind the coffin. On the return from the cemetery the band always played gay songs out of tune, for the musicians had more practice with the funeral march than with anything else. When men died so fast that we could not pull them individually to the cemetery, they were carried four at a time in the automobile ambulances. I remember once

“ORDERLY!”

leading a funeral of a German, a Roman Catholic and a Jew. The German was buried in a little plot specially reserved for the enemy at a respectful distance from the other graves; the Roman Catholic was taken into the Norman church for the services, and the Jew was chanted over in Hebrew by an Oxford rabbi who arrived specially for the occasion from Rouen. The Roman Catholic services took the longest, so we hated them, and, besides, the corpse always had to be taken into the church, while we stood for almost an hour and listened to Latin. But usually our problem was not complicated by anything more substantial than the Church of England ritual.

In the design of our pleasures good food and good wine formed the leading motif. As summer approached, the hotels and villas of the town began to fill up with Parisians on their holidays. The bicycle shop opened up, and we could hire wheels on which to ride about the surrounding country, for in our time off we were permitted to go anywhere providing we were back in the barracks by nine-thirty o'clock

CASINO FIVE

at night. The Norman countryside was filled with attractive villages, but always before starting out we would choose our destination because in that direction there was a good place to dine.

One of the best places was Gonneville, which as a town had nothing to offer but a tiny church and a couple of sleepy shops in which the bells rang loudly as one opened the glass doors and called an uninterested tradesman from his cabbage soup. But the attraction of Gonneville, besides the superb walk of six miles through hills and past farms in the glistening brilliance of a summer day or in the brisk clarity of an autumn evening, was the *auberge* of Paul Aubourg, where I have eaten some of the finest meals I have had in my life. Aubourg was tall and florid. He had known Manet and Monet when they had lived in Etretat, and Monet had given him two paintings of the cliffs at Etretat. But he also knew Haig & Haig, and his food never deviated from perfection, whether one was Guy de Maupassant over from Etretat for a bout of relaxation many years before, or a private in the American

“ORDERLY!”

Army attached to the British Expeditionary Forces, just arrived for the same purpose. The bottle-glass windows gave the dining room an air of quiet, and the shining copper pots which hung all over the walls of the kitchen deeply impressed us, who had to polish and scrub so much. Upstairs was a museum, where one looked at the Monets and the miscellaneous bric-à-brac while waiting for the food to be prepared.

When I returned to Gonnevillle once after the war, I asked Madame Aubourg for her husband. She said: “But, Monsieur has not heard, I have had a loss,” and she began to weep. I found it difficult to control my tears. A small boy, the third generation of Aubourgs, showed me about the picture gallery. Later I inquired at Etretat of a woman who sat placidly at a desk near a window in the main hardware store, and who always knew everything. “Oh, he died of drinking too much with his patrons,” she said.

Sometimes we walked over the steep cliffs to Vaucotte-sur-Mer, and sometimes we rode there on bicycles or in horse carts,

90

CASINO FIVE

across country roads cut through light brown wheat fields, with the sky clear and baby blue above, and the smell of the near-by sea infusing the soft air. In Vaucotte there was another inn. It did not have a museum, but the *patron* knew how to fix lobsters better than anyone in the surrounding country, and a girl waited on table who was more beautiful than any of the other people at any of the other inns. Also there was a cellar full of sparkling white and red wine, which made us forget that there was ever a bed-pan or a stretcher in the world. Four or five of us would sometimes hurry back from Vaucotte in the cold, clear moonlight of a winter night, oblivious of the fact that we had ever been bored.

Other recreations were not so simple. Some of the men fell in love with nurses, and some of them fell in love with each other. There were marriages, abortions and hasty departures; the marriages usually took place after the war. Today in Normandy there are long-legged Anglo-French and Franco-American children who resemble strangely some of the men I used

“ORDERLY!”

to know. If one of our men was about to become a father, and the girl was one of the French girls of the town, he was usually transferred hurriedly to some other unit of the American Army in some other part of France, for the authorities did not seem to believe that marriage was always wise under the circumstances. The nurses usually knew more about science than the women of the town. The men who fell in love with each other did not have these complications, but they had other difficulties, for sometimes they made mistakes, and tall Australian patients became very angry when they discovered that the intentions of the orderly who offered them a cheerful cup of cocoa in a hired room in the town were not entirely platonic.

III

ROCHES A

AFTER I had worked in the Casino for about a month, I was transferred to duty in ward Roches A, which in peace time had been the large dining room of the Hotel des Roches Blanches. Roches A was a long narrow room with a polished floor, one of the worries of my life, for it had to be waxed and polished regularly when we had nothing else to do, and nurses and patients were always spilling water over the results of our labours. Seventy beds lined both sides of the room, and we walked down the long aisle in the middle of the two rows of patients and did our work. The entire room was fitted with door windows on the side facing the sea, so that in summer there was plenty of sun, and in winter plenty of draft. There was a very long winding hallway which ran the length

“ORDERLY!”

of the building, and this it was my duty to scrub, half each morning. As I kneeled on a pad and scrubbed this long, narrow, dark stretch at seven in the morning, I found that I could think more clearly than at any other time of the day, and I enjoyed the exercise. Floor-scrubbing has never been fully appreciated as a hobby; it is mechanical and automatic enough to leave the mind completely free to wander over the joys and woes of the imagination; one is alone, and a contemplative mood is induced by the quiet wood from which one wipes the small facets of shining soap. But I do not advise anyone who wishes relaxation to scrub the floor of a lavatory. After I had finished the hallway each morning, my next task was to scrub the tile floor of the lavatory. All during this process the patients who were able to walk kept running in and running out, leaving the black footprints of their dirty slippers on the wet floor. And swearing angrily at them did no good, for, as they sharply insisted, they did not come in there for fun. I could appreciate the feelings of the character in Compton Macken-

ROCHES A

zie's "Sylvia Scarlett," who was driven almost to a nervous breakdown by the people who kept dashing in and dashing out of the underground lavatory of which he was the attendant.

Our work did not vary much except in the character of the patients, for every man was sick or wounded in a different way. Also, they seemed to require an inordinate number of enemas in Roches A. Administering them was sometimes difficult, for many of the British Tommies had never heard the word or known of the process until the doctor ordered me to perform the act. They thought that I had designs upon their lives, as I came wandering towards their beds with the enamel can and the much too fat india rubber hose attached thereto. This hose was not so large as a garden hose, nor so small as an enema tube should be, but the War Office knew no variety, and it was probably a tradition. Then, too, the army supplied us with only one kind of soap, and that was the same soap with which we scrubbed the floors, washed the dishes, and scrubbed the patients. It was made,

“ORDERLY!”

as I have already mentioned, of the drippings salvaged from the meagre food, and it contained great quantities of caustic soda.

In Roches A there were many men who had been gassed. They were not very much trouble, but they were pathetic, for they usually coughed their raw coughs day and night and found it difficult to sleep. I remember one nurse with whom I was on night duty whose rest was disturbed by the coughing of the gas cases as she sat in her chair and dozed. Every ten minutes she said, “Shush,” sharply, until I could stand it no longer and forgot my inferior social position sufficiently to burst out: “For God’s sake, they don’t cough because they want to!” “They can stop it if they want to,” she insisted and fell into a doze again, while I hastily revised some of my opinions about the virtues of woman’s sympathy.

One of the patients in Roches A, when I was later on night duty there, had been so unfortunate as to be in the latrine when a gas attack came over. The result was that mustard gas had eaten so vigorously

ROCHES A

into his groin that his penis was green, purple, swollen and fat. Every two hours during the night I had to spray his bandages with lysol, so that they would not dry in a hard cake. At first this had not been done, and the man's agony was so great every morning when the hard, caked, dry bandages were removed from the sore organ that the doctor had decided such pain was beyond human endurance. This man rarely slept at night and I knew his bed in the dark front room of the ward, as I approached it with the tin bowl and the glass atomizer, by the gleam from the cigarettes, which he kept lighting one on the other, and which I used to bring to him from the canteen. This was probably against the rules, but then Captain E. was in bed, probably sleeping through a deep stupour inspired by whisky, and he was not likely to make any midnight disciplinary rounds.

Captain E. did sometimes surprise us at odd moments, for that he considered to be part of his charm. I was once walking through the hallway of Roches A, which I considered almost my private property, for who had a better right than a perpetual

“ORDERLY!”

scrubber? Soon after we had arrived in France it was discovered that most of the shoes sent along with us were of size five and size eleven, so that when my first pair of shoes of my size, eight, was worn out, I was presented with a pair of size eleven, since it was found impossible even for a calculating quartermaster to force my feet into fives. I wore these for a couple of days and found that they not only gave me the appearance of a burlesque comedian, but that they cut terribly into the feet which I had to use all day long. I cabled to New York for a pair of shoes and tied up the broken shoe of my old pair with a piece of white adhesive plaster. I had not thought of Captain E., and that morning when I passed him in the dark hallway of Roches A, I saluted properly and walked on. He had been looking morosely at the ground, his favourite posture, and suddenly he whipped around in the narrow hallway and stood within three inches of my face. “What’s the matter with your shoe?” he demanded gruffly. “Lost my soul, Sir,” I said quietly, for I was sure that I could not be shot for this offense.

ROCHES A

He looked at me sternly to see whether I was trying to be funny, but the hallway was dark, and I managed to keep a straight face, for I was still too terrified of him ever to attempt to be funny. "Can't you get another pair?" he mumbled. "They have only fives and elevens, Sir, and I can't work in elevens, Sir." "Get it fixed by twelve o'clock," he snapped and walked away, obviously disgruntled that he was unable to think of any punishment for the occasion. I hurried to the bed of one of our men who had typhoid fever and borrowed his shoes, and I rushed to the town shoemaker and made him understand in the most vigorous French I could command that I should be shot if he did not fix my sole by noon. "*C'est la guerre*," he remarked, as he put aside all other work and began on my shoe immediately, while I watched him and the clock. It was a tense scene in the small shop from which all the air had been extracted for many years in the traditional French manner, and the smell of fresh leather mixed with that of bad breath gave the proper atmosphere to the drama. I beat Captain E.

“ORDERLY!”

back to my ward by half an hour, and when he appeared promptly at noon to inspect me, he found my sole in proper shape.

One of the gassed patients in Roches A had caught the gas in the face. He sat up in bed, his face twice its ordinary size and speckled purple and yellow, a rather beautiful combination — except for a swollen face. Others of our patients had trench feet, a very painful disease which grew more prevalent as winter came on, for it was caused by living in water-filled trenches during cold weather. The patients with trench feet could not endure the light weight of a sheet touching their feet, which were sometimes swollen terribly. We surrounded the acutely sensitive feet with an iron cradle, and placed the bed-clothes over this, so that nothing touched the feet themselves, and even then the men winced whenever there was the slightest vibration near their beds.

Another disease with which the beds of Roches A were filled was trench fever. This was a fever of unknown origin which attacked men in the trenches frequently,

ROCHES A

and which made it impossible for them to continue fighting. They ran very high temperatures for a period of weeks, and the fever was accompanied by pains in the bones. Their fever charts, tacked up beside their beds, resembled relief maps of the Rocky Mountains, for just as suddenly and as steadily as the fever rose, just so suddenly did it drop, only to rise again in a few days. The men were miserable, but they never died. And all of us who worked in the hospital soon got into the habit of classifying the patients into two distinct groups: those who might die, and those who could not die. We gave first attention to those who might die, and the others had to wait. The main fight was against death, and no matter how much a man might be suffering, if he was not going to die, we could not take him seriously until we had time for sympathy.

Although it was not a fatal disease, the two brilliant pathologists attached to our hospital were intensely interested in trench fever and determined to discover the secret of its origin. After much study of excrement without any very definite

“ORDERLY!”

result, they evolved the hypothesis that the lice who preyed on the men in the trenches might be responsible for trench fever. Accordingly, I was set to work to capture some lice for the use of the pathologists. When the next convoy of new patients arrived, I sat in the middle of the enormous room of Roches A, surrounded by the pajamas which had just been stripped from the bodies of the soldiers. I ripped open the seams, and whenever I found a louse there would be a shout of triumph from me and an answering roar of delight from most of the seventy men in the room. I put the tiny suspect in a small test tube, and labelled it with the name of the patient from whom it had been captured. “Put down his regimental number and his religion,” a patient would shout, and as I picked an extra large louse from the dirty grey pajama coat, I would sometimes remark: “Oooh, I’ve got a colonel!” Our patients had to be amused somehow, and concert parties were rare. I took my insect prisoners over to the pathological laboratory. Soon the pathologists discovered beyond a shadow

102

ROCHES A

of a doubt that trench fever was distributed by the feces of lice, and they received the thanks of the British Government for their very important service. After their discovery efforts were made at the front to delouse men more rapidly and to disinfect everywhere whenever possible, for men who were needed to kill and to be killed, must not be interrupted by fever.

In the rear of the long narrow hallway where I scrubbed every morning was a tiny, dark room which had been one of the linen closets of the hotel. This was allotted to us orderlies on Roches A for our "rest room," where we could go when we had no work to do, which was very seldom, for as soon as we had got comfortably seated over a stolen bottle of stout or ale under the pictures of Arras in Ruins from *L'Illustration* and a pudgy portrait of the Prince of Wales from *The Sketch*, a nurse or a walking patient would come knocking at the door to inform us that a patient wanted a bed-pan. Sometimes in the afternoons, however, we did manage to get ten or fifteen minutes here to smoke and sit and talk. Occasionally one of the favourite

“ORDERLY!”

walking patients who helped us in our work would accompany us and tell stories of the war, which was as near as we ever got to the actual fighting. The stories inflamed our imaginations, and I remember making several vigorous efforts to get transferred to the front, because I felt in this back room much as if I were in an office in New York or Washington while strange things were going on less than a hundred miles away. But once one had been trained to scrub floors, to carry stretchers, to move patients and to administer enemas, it was felt by the authorities that one's usefulness in the world of war was definitely established, and that it would be a waste to transfer those talents to spheres where they would not be required, thus creating the necessity for training the orderly to fight and someone else to take the orderly's place. With a few exceptions only those who shirked were permitted to transfer to other activities, and I had the misfortune to be conscientious. Also, the commanding officer, who was no longer the major with the lack of chin, but an eminently wise and canny sur-

104

ROCHES A

geon, probably considered that I would be useless at the front. And he was right; I should have been scared to death, and I take this opportunity of thanking him for never approving the numerous applications for transfers with which I kept bombarding him, for a private could write to a commanding officer, so long as he was careful to put his words into the proper military formulae.

The patients thought we were insane when we listened to them and then wished to get nearer the fighting. They did not realize that the horrors they were describing were merely exciting, and that — it is one of the limitations of the human imagination — no man can realize death, terror, drudgery, hunger and madness until he has felt them or seen them. It would be easy to raise colossal armies for new wars any day, and all books about the late war are dangerous, for those who participated in terrible things cannot help but give them the romantic glamour of the drama which they possessed. And with all its terrors and boredom war was so infinitely more exciting and free than the lone-

“ORDERLY!”

liness, responsibility and comparative poverty of a clerkship in a brokerage firm. All one had to fear in the war was death, which is inevitable anyway, and the horrors of the madness induced by the necessity for killing were hidden away in the huge hospitals provided for its victims.

A patient in Roches A, Bodger, gave me a picture of madness one day in the orderlies' rest-room as we sat drinking stout by the dim light of the dusty electric bulb. Above us, beside the Prince of Wales and Arras in Ruins, was a huge conception of the Kaiser hanging from a rope, presumably attached to an invisible gallows, while Little Willie, his son, lay dead at Father's feet, with a dagger through his heart: an exceptional example of the art of a Tommy, who thus conceived the last scene in the drama of the war.

“Let me tell you what I saw a few days before I came down,” Bodger said. “Slogett and I were pals, and when we went over the top at C——, we found ourselves together. When we were training, Slogett and I often took each other back to barracks at night, and once he saved my

106

ROCHES A

stripes when I tried to ask the Major if he'd half a crown to spare. And the night Slogett stole a Waac¹ from a Flying Corps chap, I threw the R. F. C. over the table just as he was about to land on Slogett's eye. Well, that's another yarn, but I mention it to show we're pals." I nodded the indication that I understood the bond of friendship.

"The night before we went over, Slogett got word that his brother Charlie'd been gassed and hadn't lived to see the Base. . . . Slogett had been gassed. Well, as a matter of fact, I've been slightly gassed myself — if they'd caught me five minutes sooner I shouldn't be here talking to you now. And if you'd ever been gassed — and I hope to Christ you never will — you'd know that a chap that's been gassed feels like doing for the first Fritz he sees. A battalion that's had some gas attacks never takes many prisoners.

"Well, Slogett was cut up about his brother Charlie, and I had a time with

¹ A member of the Woman's Aid Auxiliary Corps sent out by the British to do clerical work at the base towns, and of great service as the sexual companions of the British Expeditionary Forces.

“ORDERLY!”

him that night I can tell you, especially since we didn't get our rum ration. We ought to be hardened to death, but I never saw a man fail to take on when he heard his thirty-second cousin had gone West.

“When we got to their first line, Slogett and I were side by side. There were three Boches in a trench — one of them a tall fierce blighter, the kind you see pictures of in the picture papers. ‘Watch the fun,’ Slogett said, and he smiled that wicked I got scared for his head going wrong. With that he pulled out of his pocket a Mills bomb — you’ve seen them, haven’t you?”

I nodded assent, for they once had one of those small red and black, potato-shaped iron contrivances in the Orderly Room, and a soldier assured me as I examined it carefully and fearfully that it contained enough amonal to blow up the Hotel des Roches Blanches, if only the small pin were released. It was several days before I could pass the Orderly Room without wondering whether that pin was going to drop out. And I also recalled Hughes, who had played with a Mills bomb, and it took

108

ROCHES A

five of us to lift the remains, until he died.

"Slogett leaned over and dropped that Mills bomb into the trench, some eight feet below, and we watched. The bit of iron landed with a thump on the tall Fritz's tin hat and dropped to his feet. He stood wondering for a second. I'll never forget that look on his face, though it was only for a second that he had a face. He was so frightened that I began to get sorry for him, as I pulled Slogett back out of harm, but Slogett grinned, satisfied, after he had noticed that the three Germans had been torn to bits. 'Good job, that,' Slogett said, and I said nothing.

"In the next trench was a kid about eighteen — the kind the papers used to show Germany's declining man power. He couldn't walk, because one of our fellows had got him in the leg. I gave him a lift over the parapet, and I pointed out the direction of our lines by a kick in the rear. He took the hint and was going as fast as he could on all fours, when Slogett suddenly stopped, because we'd begun to

“ORDERLY!”

move on. ‘Come on along,’ I said, ‘it’s dangerous standing here like two scarecrows.’ ‘I’m damned if I’ll let that little bugger go,’ he said. ‘They’ve done for my brother, and I’m going to do for this one.’ At that he turns and aims his rifle and then stands there thinking it over. ‘Shall it be the left or the right,’ he says, as he looks after the German’s backside, and then he laughs and takes a ha’penny out of his breeches pocket and tosses it. ‘Head she is,’ he said, and with that he catches the kid in the right buttock. You should have seen that Fritz topple over,” and Bodger grinned as he recalled the scene in his mind.

“Then we were going along the trench, when we heard a laugh. We almost died of fright. We heard that laugh again, and it was bloody awful. There was perspiration all over me. I felt like running, but Slogett went to the end of the traverse and looked round. I stared at him but couldn’t move. Slogett motioned for me to come up. In the corner of the trench there was a kid-die of ours who looked younger yet than the young Fritz. Up against the wall of the

ROCHES A

trench was a big German, and the kid was driving his bayonet slowly through the stomach of the big German. He pushed the bayonet in, twisted it round and held the German up with all his strength. Then he pulled it out quickly and began all over again before the German had a chance to fall to the ground. Every time he pulled it out he dragged some flesh with it, and every time he slowly pushed it in, he laughed again slowly and loudly in time with his motion." Bodger placed me against the wall and demonstrated with his arm the correspondence of the bayonet and the laugh.

"This was too much — even for Slogett, and he was white. He jumped down into the trench and took hold of the kid. 'Come on out of it,' he shouted, but the kid only stared at him and laughed again; he was that mad. Slogett took away his rifle, and I gave him a lift out of the trench, and we sent him on his way back to our lines."

We sat smoking awhile until someone called me to attend to the chest cases.

In the front of the main ward there was a room full of men who had been wounded

“ORDERLY!”

badly in the chest by chunks of shrapnel, and they were kept together because most of them were in dangerous condition, and all of them were under the special care of our most eminent surgeon, a man who was both skilful and kind, which was a rare combination in a surgeon. One patient had been lying propped up high on pillows for three months. A large piece of shrapnel had entered his chest and come out his side, carrying one lung away with it, so that he whistled slightly when he spoke. He was a gentle person, sometimes querulous because of his restless pain. He had been very fond of riding a motorcycle, but he never rode a motorcycle again, though he recovered sufficiently to be sent to England, where, it was estimated, he might live for about ten years, if he was careful. All during the many months he was with us, we were sure that he was going to die, and it was considered a triumph for Dr. B. that he ever became well enough to be sent home.

Another one of these cases was an ugly little fellow with black, close-cropped hair and tiny pig's eyes. He lay on his back

ROCHES A

and exuded yellow bile from a wound that extended from nipple to nipple across his breast and resembled the gill of a huge fish. His bandages were discoloured from the yellow bile, and they usually stank in spite of frequent changes and constant irrigation of his wound with the Dakin solution which saved so many lives and prevented so much gangrene. This man was very cranky while he was ill, and, of course, he had plenty of cause, but I never liked him because when he became well enough to walk around the ward, he went about stealing the other patients' bread. Some of them who felt too ill to eat gave him their bread — for he was one of those tiny men who are always hungry — but he had to be watched to see that he did not starve the ward.

One afternoon when I was wandering about the chest cases to see that they had everything they needed, this little man called me over to his bed. He showed me a cheap tin watch on an ugly heavy chain. "Do you see that?" he asked. He spoke with a thick illiterateness which it is impossible to reproduce, and I believe he

“ORDERLY!”

came from somewhere in Lancashire. “I got that from a German prisoner,” he boasted. “I took the watch, and then handed the Boche on to the next man. He took his wallet, and then passed him on to the next. He took his buttons. When he got to the fourth man, he had nothing left, so he bayoneted him.” And Hurst laughed a proud cackle, as I walked away to get somebody a bed-pan.

Bodger, who had told me of his horrible experience with his friend Slogett, had very bad luck while he was with us. Fourteen years before the war he had had syphilis. When he joined the army, he told the recruiting officer, but he had never told his wife. He knew that men were punished for contracting venereal diseases in the army, and he wished it recorded that he had once had syphilis. While he was in our hospital, where he had come with trench fever, he made himself exceedingly useful by helping orderlies and nurses with their work and serving the patients their food. As a reward he was permitted to remain a long time, and he also received several bottles of stout or ale each day.

ROCHES A

Whether it was the alcohol, or whatever it was, suddenly red sores appeared on his lips, and the doctor soon discovered that the syphilis had returned. When Bodger heard this, he sank into despair. I have never seen a sadder face. We had to isolate him from the other patients, and he could not seem to understand why we would no longer permit him to serve the porridge. I used to sit with him in the orderlies' rest-room during as much of the time as I could spare of the two or three days before he was sent to the huge army hospital for venereal diseases in Le Havre. He needed someone to talk to badly, and he explained to me the reason for his despair. First of all, the War Office would write and inform his wife that he had contracted syphilis. He said that the recruiting officer had assured him before he enlisted that the proper notation would be made that he had contracted the disease before entering the army, and that therefore he would not be punished for it. "But," he told me, "I know what will happen to me. As soon as I'm cured they'll send me to the front, and then they'll keep shifting me to the hottest

“ORDERLY!”

places until I'm killed. Wherever there's a big drive on, I'll be there, because, you see, they've got too much venereal disease in England now because of the war, and they don't want any of us back if they can help it." Whether this was a British policy, I do not know, but I did hear that between eighty and ninety thousand British soldiers and officers were incapacitated every day during the last three years of the war on account of venereal diseases. I do not know where these rumoured figures came from. Bodger had made up his mind to his own solution. "As soon as I get back up the line," he told me, "I'm going to shoot myself." At the time I believe he thought he would, for I have never seen a sadder face than his as he stared at me out of his pleasant, gentle, blue eyes. I never knew whether he killed himself or not, for he was sent to the venereal hospital a few days later, and the only word I ever heard from him was the statement in a letter from another patient that he had met him in a camp behind the lines on his way back to the front after he had been cured.

ROCHES A

While I was on duty in the Hotel des Roches Blanches, I watched a man's arm being amputated. I had been curious to see the worst, and though I had watched several comparatively minor operations, I had never seen an amputation. The surgeon who was performing the operation kindly permitted me to remain in the operating room while he amputated the arm of one of our patients, named Robinson. As he was rolling up his sleeves in the sealed, hot operating room, the surgeon explained to me that it was better that this arm should come off because it was so badly smashed that it would never be of any use to the man, and if it remained there was a great chance that the wound would become gangrenous and cause the patient's death:

The patient was slowly feeling the effects of the mixture of ether and chloroform; the cloying odour filled the tight room. The arm, it was the left one, had a large gash which extended from just above the wrist to just beyond the elbow. One could almost look through the torn forearm when the operating room orderly

“ORDERLY!”

had removed the bandages. I stood behind the surgeon, out of the way, while he performed his work, and he explained to me what he was doing as he went along.

A tourniquet had been attached to the arm above the elbow to prevent the artery from discharging spurts of blood. Then the nurse handed the surgeon a small knife, which looked to me exactly like a very shiny kitchen knife of the kind we sometimes used to peel potatoes. But it was spotlessly clean and sterile and shone brilliantly as the surgeon took it up daintily in his rubber-gloved hands. The knife was so sharp that all the surgeon had to do was to place it lightly on the flesh of the patient's arm just above the last tear made by his wound, and the knife sank deeply into the flesh. Then he deftly described a circle with the knife, and it was a perfect circle. He pushed back the flesh, which was much like fresh beefsteak, only brighter red, and then he pared off bits of skin which hung over the area of flesh. The nurses attached small scissor clamps to each artery and vein, while the orderly slipped the patient's arm out and threw

it into a pail under the operating table, on which the man was breathing deeply and dreaming actively, and now and again mumbling quietly and sleepily. The bone was broken, and therefore the arm had slid out easily once the flesh had been cut into and pushed back. But jutting out from the stump of raw flesh which was fresh with red blood was about three inches of hard bone. The surgeon took the saw which the nurse handed to him, and he began the piercing process of sawing the firm piece of bone. This required strength, and I noticed that the muscles of his freckled biceps were moving vigorously, and the contortions of his face also indicated that he was working hard. The scraping sound of the saw on the bone is one that even nurses find nerve-wracking.

After the bone had been sawed off neatly, so that it did not project beyond the six inches of arm that were left to this man, all the arteries and veins were tied securely with sterilized catgut. Then the nurses and orderly dressed the stump with gauze and bandages, while the surgeon removed his rubber gloves and went on talk-

“ORDERLY!”

ing to me as he washed his hands and wiped the perspiration from his face. The whole operation had occupied about ten minutes. I thanked the surgeon and went for an orderly to help me carry Robinson back to bed.

The spiritual effect of this operation was terrible to witness. Robinson, it turned out, had been a shoemaker before the war, and he had a wife and two children to support. As soon as he recovered from the effects of the ether, and as soon as the aching of his stump had died down sufficiently to give him opportunity to think, he spent all day in a state of utter depression. He lay in bed and looked deeply off into nowhere, and none of us had the heart to attempt to comfort him, for we could not imagine what possible comfort there could be in the situation. His depression was so dignified that it commanded respect as well as pity, and I never saw him smile again from the time he came out of the ether until the day we put him on a stretcher to send him back to his wife and children in England.

ROCHES A

It was while I was on duty in Roches A that I served on night duty in the hospital. We were now going through our first winter, which was symbolized by a lovely layer of clean snow on the cliffs and cases of frost-bite, bronchitis and pneumonia in the wards. But when it was not raining, the air was usually mild, and sometimes when I went to bed at nine or ten o'clock in the morning, the day would be soft as spring, and one regretted the necessity for sleep. Occasionally some of us night orderlies would take a long walk instead of sleeping. We all slept together in a special part of the garage where the day staff ate, and usually we were so sleepy that we did not hear the noise of crap games and other recreational enthusiasms. At about five o'clock in the afternoon we usually got up, and soon afterwards we had our first meal in the garage, the same meal the day orderlies called their supper. It was often beans and sometimes salmon and always pallid tea. At seven o'clock in the evening we appeared at our various wards for duty.

Each ward had one night orderly and one night nurse, and in normal times the

“ORDERLY!”

work was easy, but for the first week after a convoy had arrived, we were usually kept busy all night. The first part of the evening and the last part of the morning were the most hectic in Roches A. My first duty after I took over from the day orderly and learned from him any particular instructions for specially serious cases, was to walk down the aisles of the long converted dining room of the hotel with a bottle of compound cathartic pills in my hand. These I got into the habit of shaking up and down in their brown glass bottle and shouting, “Number Nines, Number Nines,” much as the street hawkers at home used to shout, “Easter lilies, Easter lilies.” Those men who needed the pills were supposed to stop me in my course, and this they did by means of catcalls, whistling and sounds of “Psst.” I also learned in this period of my education to mix castor oil with sherry so that it was a pleasure.

Some of the patients received hot milk before they went to bed, and this I distributed in blue enamel pannikins from a large tin pail. Then there was nothing

ROCHES A

to do except to sit on beds and talk with patients or to give them bed-pans when they asked for them, until eight-thirty when the lights were turned out. There was a large stove in the middle of the room, and this I kept full of fire by shovelling coal into it at irregular intervals. This was the only heat in the large room, and it never extended beyond a short distance from the stove, but the patients were wrapped in many blankets, and they did not suffer. The nights were cold, and the nurse and I suffered in spite of sweaters, coats and blankets. We sat opposite each other, she in a large leather arm-chair that looked as if it had come out of some Union League Club window many years before, and I in a creaking wicker chair. We sat there behind one of the red screens, reading by the dim light of the one electric bulb, or else talking in whispers. If the nurse was pleasant, the work was very congenial, and some of the most permanent romances dated from night duty. But if the nurse was fussy or irritable or ugly it was worse than marriage, for no man had to sit within ten feet of his

“ORDERLY!”

wife for most of the time from seven o'clock in the evening until seven o'clock the next morning every night for a month.

The patients sometimes wanted water, a bed-pan, or to have their pillows shifted. I had trained the chest cases in the front room of the ward to rap lightly on their wooden bedside lockers with their blue enamel sputum cups, when they wanted me. Frequently they had to be helped up higher in bed on their pillows, for some of them could not sleep unless they were propped up.

At midnight the night orderlies had their dinner. All of us went to a kitchen in one of the hospital buildings, where a cook, assisted sometimes by a German prisoner, made us excellent meals. It was pleasant walking through a few blocks of the dead, sleeping town on the cold winter nights, with only the sound of the waves on the pebbles and the sound of one's own heavy boots on the road to break the solitude. For about half an hour we ate and talked in the kitchen of the Hotel de la Plage; we made arrangements for excursions on the following day, and when

ROCHES A

we got back to the ward, the nurse went for her dinner.

If it was too cold to keep one's hands holding a book outside a blanket, I found that I usually dozed off to sleep. We were permitted to sleep sitting in chairs, but we were not permitted to lie down on an empty bed, for once we did so, we were sure to go sound asleep, whereas, dozing in a chair, one heard the faintest tap of a sputum cup upon a locker, or even the whispered call of a patient who had awakened. I remember one of my night patients whose right leg had been amputated, whose left arm was badly wounded, and who was also deaf. He rarely slept, and at first he was given narcotics, but after a week or so of morphine injections, it was feared that he might become too dependent upon drugs, and thereafter we refused all his pleas for the hypodermic needle. After he had begged pitifully one evening, we tested him out by giving him an injection of alcohol. The tingle in his arm after the injection made him imagine that he had received the usual morphine, and he went to sleep. After that we were stern

“ORDERLY!”

with him, and he was compelled to spend a few sleepless, horrible nights, until he became accustomed to sleeping without narcotics. At almost precisely three o'clock every morning, just as I was dozing, I would hear a long, loud and weird whisper, "Werrrrn-errr." I would get up from my chair and walk in my noiseless felt slippers to his bed. "What do you want?" "What time is it?" he would whisper loudly in tones he could not hear himself, and then I would try to tell him the time without waking any of the patients near-by. Once, after this same scene had taken place every night for about two weeks, I grew slightly impatient, and I could not resist the cheap temptation to ask him: "Have you got a date?" But he was more amused than hurt. Frequently at about half past three in the morning, he imagined that he wanted a bed-pan. This was a difficulty, for during the day when he wanted such attention, there were two people to raise him up without giving him pain, but at night I had to do the job alone, for it was considered immodest for the nurses to have anything to do with

ROCHES A

the technique of bed-pans. In fact, the etiquette was that they must not even see the tin receptacles raw, and we had to walk through the wards with the shameful articles covered with a silly, and usually dirty cover, which resembled strangely the Union Jack with which the coffins were covered, only it was smaller. Whenever I gave Johnson a bed-pan, I was in terror that I would give him pain. The stump of his raw right leg was propped up with cotton gauze pads, and I had to be careful that these did not become dislodged and cause his sensitive stump to fall with an agonizing thud onto the bed. When I had brought the bed-pan, I would place it as near as possible to his backside, and then he would put his one good arm, the right one, around my neck and raise his large body slowly and painfully, while I lifted the small of his back with one arm and shoved the bed-pan carefully under him with my free hand. Then I would go away, and when I heard once more the elongated whisper of my name, I would return and take him gently as possible from his throne. Usually he had not re-

“ORDERLY!”

quired the bed-pan at all. Then sometimes he slept, but if he did not, he usually wanted to know the time every half hour until daylight, for he hated the loneliness of the silent long hours of dawn.

The first death of a patient in our ward while I was on night duty was one of the tense experiences of my hospital career. The patient was a huge man who had been a sailor before the war. He had a hole in his back so large that it held eighteen ounces of Dakin solution, and a man of ordinary strength probably would not have lasted two days with such a wound. At half past nine one night we noticed that he was getting very weak. The nurse sent me for the doctor, who ordered a coffee enema and some bromide. The man was in horrible agony, and either the nurse or I watched over him every minute. I remember that it was a very cold night. Outside the glass doors of the ward where he lay the rope of the flag pole kept making a disturbing, monotonous sound as the wind knocked it against the pole. The patient begged to be fanned, for he found it

ROCHES A

easier to breathe when I fanned him, so I stood over him for hours with a palm leaf fan, gently moving it to produce waves of air and blowing on my own hands at intervals to keep them warm. All the time he gasped desperately for breath, and he kept asking me anxiously, "I'm not going to die, am I?" "No, you'll feel much better in the morning," I lied, or said anything comforting that came into my befuddled head, for I found at times the tears coming to my eyes and thick lumps in my throat, accustomed as I was to watch men die. This kept up from half past nine at night until two o'clock in the morning. The nurse fanned him while I ate my dinner, and at half past one I woke the doctor, who hated to be disturbed again for an inevitable death, but he ordered us to give the man morphine. He fell into a half sleep but kept begging to be fanned. At about three o'clock he began to gasp horribly for breath, and his chest heaved as he tried desperately to keep his life. He begged to be fanned harder, and I kept fanning harder and harder for half an hour, when his gasps became shorter

“ORDERLY!”

and shorter, as his chest gradually subsided. Finally I noticed that his dim grey jaw was twitching no longer, and I shined my electric flashlight into his face. His two eyes were cold and glassy, and his face was livid, peaceful and yellow. There was no longer any trace of the terrible pain that had swept his face with horrible contortions as he had struggled for breath. I woke the doctor again, who listened with a stethoscope and pronounced him dead officially.

I went across the road to the Pathological Laboratory. On the first floor was a room filled with test tubes, alembics and other instruments, where someone had neglected to turn off an electric light. As I passed it I saw facing me a dead leg of a man, the toes stiffly looking at me, as it lay, without a body, on the table in front of my eyes. My nerves were bad at the moment, and this sight made my heart jump with terror, for this dead, unattached, cold, bluish limb looked more horrible than the peaceful face I had just left. I woke the orderly who slept upstairs, and whose duty it was to prepare the

130

ROCHES A

dead bodies. His associate was on leave in Paris at the moment, and so I had to assist him with the dead man.

Every opening of the dead body we plugged up with cotton wadding, and this the mortuary orderly did with the aid of a forceps, while I stood by and handed him the materials. He was sleepy and matter of fact, for he had gone through these early morning duties so often, but he was efficient, for unless the job was done properly, he knew that he would have to account to the doctor in charge of the autopsies. He put cotton in the ears and the nostrils and the mouth; then he shoved great wads of cotton up the rectum. Then he tied the penis tightly with a string. When it was thus made impossible for any fluid matter to leak from the corpse in the course of its decomposition, we closed the eyes, covered the body with a sheet and carried it on a stretcher to the Morgue. As we jogged along with our load, our boots crunching on the pebbles of the esplanade, the dawn was coming up around the beautiful cliffs, and there was a lovely pink glow in the sky, as if someone

“ORDERLY!”

had made a mountain of strawberry ice cream during the cold winter night.

A haemorrhage during the night was dramatic and fearful. Patients who had been operated upon had to be watched constantly to see that they did not suddenly bleed. One night the nurse with whom I was then on duty, a fussy little creature who had never in her life received all the authority she craved, suddenly discovered that the artery in a patient's wound was spurting blood. It was then about midnight, and she became so excited that she ran around in circles and had me running around in circles too, while all that was necessary immediately was for her to ask that I bring her quickly the tourniquet that always hung on the back of the door of the medicine closet. I got this to her, and we pulled it tightly around the man's leg above the wound; he had just awakened to find himself treated roughly and quickly, and he did not know his danger. Then I chased through the streets of the town to wake the officer on duty. We carried the patient to the operat-

132

ROCHES A

ing room, where the bleeding artery was effectively tied up, and the terrifying spurts of rich red blood which pumped from the wound with the rapid and regular motion of the heart, ceased. Then we were able to continue with our other duties. Whenever anything suddenly serious occurred in the ward, the other patients who happened to be awake sensed it immediately and remained quiet, no matter what their needs, until we had time to attend to them.

Most of the time, however, our night lives were uneventful, and we usually sat in our chairs and waited for daylight. Once while I was on night duty an air raid warning varied the monotony of our existence. Whenever German airplanes were bombing towns behind the lines, the officials in the town which had just been bombed telephoned ahead to the next large town, and all army posts in that area were notified by telephone that German airplanes were on their way. At about three o'clock one morning a message arrived, and the night sergeant, a finicky, middle-aged, soft little man, whom we all called

“ORDERLY!”

“Mother Superior,” came rushing into the ward whispering excitedly, “Turn out all the lights; turn out all the lights!” This meant that we must extinguish even our shaded candles and electric flashlights, and nothing much could be done except to wait for the fatal crashes until a telephone message came through that the airplanes had disappeared. The nurse and I sat in the thick blackness and waited for the building to crash down upon us. We had never been in an air raid, and therefore we were not frightened. We sat waiting calmly in our chairs for half an hour until we were told that we might use the lights again.

The chance of our buildings being demolished was not great, for it was not likely that the Germans, even if they knew of our existence, would bother with us, when eighteen miles away in Le Havre they could do so much more valuable damage. On the night I have mentioned the Germans bombed Boulogne, Rouen and Le Havre. They bombed Le Havre frequently, for the city was a huge British base, and on our excursions once a month

134

ROCHES A

to that city we sometimes saw the remaining bare walls, after a bomb had ripped the body of a house out, leaving nothing but a staircase or a piece of flooring hanging crazily in the midst of walls and bricks.

At six o'clock every morning I woke the patients and gave them water with which to wash. Most of them wanted to sleep longer, but it was necessary for all of them to be washed at once, if they were to be washed at all, for the day orderlies were too busy to attend to them later, and I went off duty at seven o'clock. I carried an armful of tin basins, and in the other hand a large tin pail filled with hot water which I had heated on a gas stove. I began at the head of the room, banged a basin down on the wooden locker, poured hot water into it, shook the sleeping patient and said in tones that soon took on an unconscious sing-song: "*There you are, have a wash.*" As I advanced down the long room droning sleepily, "*There you are, have a wash,*" the patients who were now beginning to wake by themselves repeated it in mimicry, so that the ward rang with imitations

“ORDERLY!”

of my song. Those patients who had lost an arm or a hand could not wash themselves, and these I washed when I had finished distributing the water and basins. As I stood washing the faces of men whose arms had been amputated, requests for urinals would be fired at me from all over the room. By the time the day staff came on duty the last man had been served, and I could then go to breakfast and to sleep.

At the beginning of March 1918 I received permission to spend five days in Paris. The hospital was quiet, for at the front they were preparing, after a winter of comparative inactivity, to receive the tremendous German offensive, which began later in that March.

I arrived at the Gare St. Lazare one night about ten with one other orderly. The streets were lighted only by a few dull blue arc lamps around the square in front of the station, and we tried vainly to pick out from the darkness the form of a free taxicab. We were looking for the American University Union, where good rooms with baths were granted at small rates to sol-

ROCHES A

diers who had happened to be in college. It was discouraging to stand in the darkness, holding a sack with a change of underwear and a clean khaki shirt, and to have no idea of the possible direction of the hotel we had merely heard of, but just as we were about to walk off in any direction, we were able to bribe an old man who operated one of the scarce cabs to take us where we wanted to go.

The rooms in the Hotel Royal, near the Palais Royal, seemed fantastic as dreams after ten months of barracks. They had real beds and real baths — we played with the faucets to make sure — and one could remain in both as long as one wished. One could have breakfast in bed, with real dishes, an indescribable luxury after ten months of food tinged with tin.

In spite of the fact that for the first time in almost a year I could sleep as late as I pleased, I found myself too excited to keep off the streets. The weather was soft and clear, with the sky that lovely quiet blue which Paris sometimes gets towards spring, and all day I wandered about look-

“ORDERLY!”

ing from side to side at churches and cafés, with very little desire to go into the insides of the former and an irresistible impulse to sit down in front of the latter. We ate and we drank as much as the war regulations permitted, for the restaurants were open only for a few hours, from noon till afternoon and for a short time at night. The bread was grey, and there were meatless days, and fat Frenchmen on trains carried small pieces of paper with two pieces of sugar wrapped carefully therein, which they drew out carefully from their vests when the time came for coffee, and deposited them lovingly in their drink, while their envious neighbours felt sure that they must be related to the President of the Republic. Taxicabs were only permitted to take one to a destination, and not for a drive. But bribery overcame all regulations. I asked a taxicab driver to take a friend and me through the Bois de Boulogne one pleasant afternoon. “*Mais, c’est défendu,*” he replied. “*Alors, combien ça fait pour la promenade de Bois de Boulogne?*” “*Dix francs,*” he answered, and we diminished the supply of scarce

138

ROCHES A

petrole by a couple of gallons. Everyone on leave in Paris felt that war regulations were to be broken for the occasion, and the facilities for breaking them sprang up like magic.

Girls paraded the dark streets and jumped out at one, shouting, "Hello, keed!" And the prophylactic station in the Rue St. Anne kept open day and night, so that the percentage of venereal disease was very slight.

At night we drank or went to the Opera or the Grand Guignol, and I remember seeing at the Grand Guignol a representation of "The Fall of the House of Usher," which frightened me more than anything I had seen in hospital beds. The most interesting spectacle I witnessed, however, was the first performance of Anatole France's *Les Noces Corinthiennes*, at the Theatre Français, and it was interesting, not because of the play, of which I scarcely understood ten words, but because of the air raid which for a moment threatened to interrupt it. I was sitting in the second row of the orchestra next to a small dark man who was following every line from a

“ORDERLY!”

copy-book he had on his knees. The time was the middle of the second act, and Hermas, I gathered from the program, an old pagan, was in the midst of his revels. He wiggled towards the wings and suddenly stopped in the middle of a line of elegant verse. With a shrug of his shoulders and a sardonic smile, he extended his hands and announced: “*Messieurs et Madames, je suis informé qu’il y a une alerte.*” The house was packed, for it was the first performance, and there were cries of disgust that came deep from French chests. My neighbour, who suddenly discovered that the interpolated sentence was not in his copy-book, jumped to his feet, waved his hands above his head and screamed: “*Con-tinuez! Con-tinuez!*” The cry was taken up all over the excited house, until Hermas announced: “*Nous allons continuer, mais. . .*” At this point the very beautiful heroine stepped forward and took the situation out of the old pagan’s hands by announcing with a smirk and a smile: “*Les caves sont pour ceux qu’ils les desirent.*” There was wild applause, and no more than a hundred

140

ROCHES A

shamefaced individuals dared to leave sensibly for the cellar. The words of Anatole France began again, only to be interrupted ten minutes later by piercing sirens warning the city of the air raid. The play went on. During the *entr'acte* I was walking in the lobby smoking a cigarette. Suddenly there was a terrific crash, whirl and boom. The large building shook to its roots, as if some very angry giant had picked it up and was trying fiercely to teach it to behave. A French officer stopped in his stroll for a moment, looked at me, smiled and said: "*Ha, ha; la, la; ils commencent,*" and then he continued his cigarette and his walk. A Belgian informed me in rather broken English that the Germans drop three bombs at once in order to preserve their equilibrium, and then he introduced me to his nephew who was studying for a commission in the Belgian aviation corps. The play continued, and we heard nothing more of the air raid except the intermittent boom of an anti-aircraft gun. At the end of the performance the old pagan announced that the cellars of the Theatre Français were at the disposal

“ORDERLY!”

of those who were afraid to go home in the dark.

My five days and nights flew by with a cruel rapidity, and I returned to Etretat, not to leave it again for another seven months. My only consolation was that I had been able to buy in Paris enough books to keep me drugged for months.

IV

THE OFFICERS' HOSPITAL

THE Officers' Hospital was a three-storey brick villa, with a gravel driveway leading up to an entrance of stone steps. In the front and the rear were large lawns. The villa had been used in peace times to accommodate the overflow patronage of the Hotel des Roches Blanches when the Etretat season was in full swing, and it was used by the army for the accommodation of sick and wounded officers. Those who could not be placed in rooms were put in the two large marquee tents which filled the left-hand side of the rear lawn. It was in front of this building that I found myself on spring mornings, when the great German drive was at its worst, meditatively raking leaves.

I resented it severely when I was informed one day that I would report for

“ORDERLY!”

duty at the Officers' Hospital. In spite of everything I had been enjoying myself in the congenial atmosphere of Roches A, and officers as patients were a nuisance, for one had to consider their status as well as their wounds; they could not be told to wait their turn, and they frequently demanded much out of turn, varying in offensiveness with their inherent nastiness and their degree of rank. I had never envied those who served them, but, war was war, and I went sluggishly to my new work.

I was assigned by the sergeant in charge, who, before the war, had been a minister of the gospel, to work in the kitchen. It was a large room with a floor of red flagstones and a large French stove, presided over by a Frenchwoman of middle age. My companion in the work was a soldier twice my size who was proud of his physique. He gave me a knife and pointed to a bag of potatoes. Every meal, except breakfast, included French fried potatoes, and I proceeded to peel them, cutting all my thumbs frequently in the process. This earned me the contempt of my fellow

THE OFFICERS' HOSPITAL

worker and the curiosity of Madame, who adored the husky blond man with whom I worked. After we had peeled the potatoes and gossiped about the hospital events, we went for the supplies. This meant carrying enormous boxes of food and bags of potatoes on a stretcher up a very steep hill, and I found it more difficult than carrying patients upstairs. This my companion noticed, and he looked quite as if he had expected as much, though I did my best to conceal my fatigue, as I took one end of the stretcher while he held the other.

After we had returned to the kitchen with the supplies, we helped Madame, who was excitable and temperamental, prepare the luncheon for fifty officers. They all had soup, a roast, French fried potatoes, a dessert and coffee. The food was well cooked, but it never varied. One advantage of this job was that we got good food after the officers had finished, and Madame was willing that we should eat as much as we wanted of the remains, but she was particularly insistent that we must not steal French fried potatoes from

“ORDERLY!”

the dumb-waiter when they went up to the pantry. When she caught the pantry-men stealing them, she usually resigned and had to be petted.

After lunch on my first day, my companion decided that it would be his afternoon off duty, and I was told to scrub the kitchen floor and to clean fifteen fish. Madame also went home every afternoon, so that I had the large, warm, quiet kitchen to myself, with nothing to do but scrub the floor, clean the fish and keep the stove going until Madame returned at about four o'clock in the afternoon to begin preparations for dinner, which was almost the same as luncheon, with the addition of the fish. As I stood cleaning the fish over the kitchen sink, a nurse who wanted hot water for hot water bottles watched over my shoulder; she laughed merrily, for I had never cleaned a fish in my life, and she seemed to sense the fact.

Within a few days it was discovered that I was not strong enough to carry the stretcher with supplies up the hill, and I was transferred from work in the kitchen to the pantry, one flight up. At first this

THE OFFICERS' HOSPITAL

pleased me, for I knew that my kitchen companion and I would never be friends, for he respected nothing that was not taller than he, though he treated me well and had a quiet dignity about his prowess. Then, too, Madame and he seemed to have established in the course of the many months he had worked in the kitchen, an impregnable *entente*, and I was resented as an outsider.

In the pantry I found that I was to work with a little man, very neat, who was pleasant, but snobbish. His manners and motions were dainty, but not affected, and I subsequently learned that he loved British second lieutenants. Our duties the first thing in the morning were to prepare about twenty trays for officers who were in bed, sick or wounded. These trays always bore a tea cup, a knife and fork and spoon, a small round dish of marmalade and a plate for the eternal bacon and eggs. We placed the food on these trays, as it came from the kitchen on the dumb-waiter, while the orderlies who worked on the various floors besieged us for their respective trays. When all this was finished, the table

“ORDERLY!”

had to be set for the twenty or more officers who came down to the dining room for their meals. Then one of us had to wait on table with one of the orderlies, while the other one took the food off the dumb-waiter and placed it for the waiters to take into the dining room.

Waiting on table was for me a terrific ordeal, for one was supposed to be so sombre about it, but my little companion loved it, for it brought him into contact with British officers. My hand trembled as I passed the bacon and eggs and filled the cups with tea, and I never seemed to learn not to pay attention to what the officers were saying to each other while they ate. The morning that was most disastrous for me was that on which one of the officers told his companions the story of the little girl in England who was taking the cow to bull when she met the village parson. “Where are you going, little girl?” asked the parson. “I’m taking the cow to bull, Sir.” “Aren’t you rather young to be doing that, can’t your father do it?” “No, Sir, must be a bull, Sir, must be a bull, Sir.” The officers burst out

THE OFFICERS' HOSPITAL

laughing and so did I, almost spilling a plate of bacon and eggs on the uniform of a first lieutenant.

When we had cleaned the dishes from the large dining room table, we had to wash them, and our supply of hot water was limited to the contents of one pail which we placed on the kitchen stove the first thing in the morning. The grease of bacon and eggs is difficult to remove with limited hot water, and the number of our dishes was usually less than the number of officers in the hospital, so that we had to wash dishes rapidly, in order that the same plates might be used for the second course. This resulted in considerable breakage, and the British quartermaster insisted that each time we broke a plate or a cup we must put down on a form, supplied for that purpose, the article broken, the breaker and the reason. I found that my name was put down by the other orderlies for most of their own misdeeds, but that was because I happened to break most of the dishes, and they thought that I might as well take the credit for all. Some of the reasons they

“ORDERLY!”

manufactured for me were fantastic, including the phrases, “Beaucoup nervousness” and “Too much soft soap.” Once a month there was an inventory, at which time we had to lay out on the dining room table all the dishes and other eating and cooking utensils, broken and unbroken, which the Officers’ Hospital possessed. We were compelled to keep the broken pieces of dishes until inventory time. I do not know whether this rule was designed to prevent us from stealing or to make us careful, but it accomplished neither result, for none of us wanted dishes, and we did not break them on purpose.

When the nervous little British captain who was our quartermaster officer arrived on the first of the month, the hospital was entirely disrupted. On the table in the dining room reposed mounds of plates, broken and unbroken, pieces of glasses, steel knives, cups, kitchen utensils, platters and all the other articles necessary for feeding fifty or more patients. Captain L. was in the habit of carrying out his duty to the letter. His small hands, covered with jade rings, for he had been in China

150

THE OFFICERS' HOSPITAL

for many years before the war, shook with nervous intensity as he went through the broken pieces with gestures of disgust. The head nurse accompanied him to hear his complaints, and he was always in a fury. I remember one disastrous month after the armies had been active at the front, when we had thirty-two broken tumblers. Captain L. started to count the pieces as they lay sadly on the dining room table. He lost count. He began again with fussy indignation, and again he lost count. "My God," he said with a staccato, husky disgust, "I've lost count again! Christ! How many are there?" "Thirty-two," one of us answered solemnly. "Thirty-two!" he screamed. "Thirty-two, Sister!" he said, turning to the nurse, "Thirty-two!" She looked unimpressed, for she knew how hard we had had to work that month. "Why, Sister, I never broke a tumbler in my life," squeaked Captain L. "I never broke a tumbler in my life," he insisted. "Did you ever wash one?" the nurse asked with superb indifference. "No," he answered, "of course I never washed one, but I never broke one!" The scene was

“ORDERLY!”

ludicrous, and he realized it; here we were, five tall men dressed as soldiers standing round a table full of broken dishes, while an officer held an inquest with a nurse as audience. But Captain L.'s wrath was not softened by any sense of humour, and he bobbed up and down in an indignant trot as he left the hospital building, assuring us that he would only give us half the number of new tumblers for our broken ones, and that we should have to do with what we had. We merely counted this another of the horrors of war, and we were glad to be rid of him for another month.

When we took a worn scrubbing-brush to Captain L.'s quartermaster stores to exchange it for a new one after using it for many months, he took it up carefully by the wooden back in two of his dainty fingers, held it up with a gesture of infinite disgust and examined the worn, dirty, wet bristles. "Use it for another month," he always said, "it's perfectly all right yet." After one got to know him better, Captain L. was pleasant and amusing in a sharp way, but he would not give a new scrubbing brush even to a friend. He went

THE OFFICERS' HOSPITAL

to England on leave once while he was attached to our hospital, and he returned engaged to be married. "Of course," he told one of my friends with whom he had become friendly, "she has money; I said to her, 'My dear, I don't expect you to support me, but I don't expect you to expect me to support you.'"

By noon we had usually finished washing the many dishes, and then we had time to scrub the pantry floor—everywhere there was a floor to scrub. And then it was time to prepare for the officers' lunch. The eternal round of dishes, trays and table-setting was more maddening than any other work I had had to do, and I realized for the first time in my life how much work goes into keeping the human animal supplied with fuel. In the afternoons we sometimes had a few hours off duty, but we were always busy washing and drying the dinner dishes until after eight o'clock at night.

The man with whom I worked was sometimes amusing but always fussy, and he usually went back over all the knives and forks I had just laid on the dining

“ORDERLY!”

room table and gave them an extra touch of daintiness, saying as he did so: “You Americans, you don’t know how to do such things,” for he had been born in the British Isles. To which I could not help replying one beautiful spring evening: “Yes, the British make the best servants in the world.” Whereupon the little man spat at me in the manner of a tormented cat in heat, and we went on with our work in silence. Once he invited me to go swimming with him at a beach some distance from the hospital, where we would not require bathing suits. He had never exhibited the slightest love interest, and I had not yet heard of his predilections, for those things were not, unfortunately, part of the curriculum of Columbia University, and my mother never told me all she should. I went with him and spent a delightful afternoon. A long, deserted pebble beach was surrounded by two enormous cliffs. High up on one of them a French sentry guarded a lighthouse. We undressed and jumped into the cool blue water, and, drying ourselves on the beach, shining with sunlight and salt water, we must have

THE OFFICERS' HOSPITAL

looked altogether too Sorolla. I happened to glance to the right, and in the far, dreamy distance under the arch of one of the cliffs was a patient languorously making love to a French girl. If they saw us, they did not care, and we saw them and smiled. When we returned to our dishes at the pantry sink, I was still ignorant of my friend's fancy, and it was only months later that I learned of his passion for second lieutenants in the British Army. He could make up a tea tray more neatly than anyone I have ever known.

One of our duties as pantrymen in the Officers' Hospital was to guard the one bottle of whisky and the bottles of stout, ale and lime-juice which were brought up every morning by the kitchen staff for the use of the officers. Our interpretation of this duty was rather lax, when there was enough left over, and all the orderlies usually had drinks whenever they wanted any, if there was not danger of cutting into the supplies so much that it would be noticed by our ministerial sergeant. There was one orderly, however, whose profession in civilian life had been that of

“ORDERLY!”

“bouncer” in a Ninth Avenue saloon, and his favourite drink was whisky. He drank so much of it that there was danger of detection and punishment. He demanded more one afternoon, and I refused him. “You can’t have any,” I said, and he growled very viciously. His body was heavy, powerful and thuglike, but I was innocent of the danger I was running, for I did not then know of his civilian occupation. We stood at the head of the twisting staircase leading from the pantry to the kitchen, with the hard red stone floor as its terminus downstairs. “Give me a drink,” he growled. “You can’t have any,” I repeated, very stubborn, but very frightened. “Why, you lousy son of a bitch, I’ll throw you downstairs,” he shouted. We were alone in the building. White, I am sure, trembling, I know, I expected fully to go tumbling down the stairs, but I managed to get out of my terrified face the words: “Do it!” I do not know how I had the nerve. I had never had such nerve before, but I suppose I felt as the late Theodore Roosevelt did about foreign affairs, that unless this issue was decided

156

THE OFFICERS' HOSPITAL

once for all, my life would be miserable every day thereafter, and that I might as well risk a possible broken neck as to endure eternal bullying. He turned away; why, I do not know. Perhaps he felt that breaking my neck was not worth the possible punishment which might follow. And there was no more trouble about the whisky. Previous to this incident a whole bottle of whisky had disappeared, and though everyone knew that our thug companion had stolen it, he had left no evidence. The ministerial sergeant examined each of us separately in his office, but we all made perfect witnesses, including the guilty one, and the *cause célèbre* had had to be abandoned.

After I had worked in the pantry for almost two months, I was transferred to duty on the top floor. This meant taking care of five rooms and their occupants, which was not so difficult, but the sergeant came along every afternoon and felt the wainscoting in the hallway to make sure that I had dusted it thoroughly, and the hardwood floor of the narrow hallway as well as the floors in all the rooms and in

“ORDERLY!”

the lavatory had to be waxed frequently and kept shining brilliantly; and most of the officers wore rubber heels.

When we came on duty at seven o'clock every morning, I and the orderly on the floor below sat in a small room on my floor polishing the officers' boots and telling each other how much we would like to be in the flying corps. It was part of our job to polish the officers' boots, which they left outside their doors, but we did not have to polish their buttons. This distinction was probably due to the fact that the American Army had bronze buttons which did not require polishing. I remember that after one convoy a colonel who had been in the British Army for twenty-seven years rang his bell. I entered his room, and he eyed me genially from his bed in the corner. "I've heard you Americans were heah," he said, "but you're the first I've seen." I stood still and permitted him an eyefull. He seemed to feel a difference between us and his own servants at the front, for he asked me, rather timidly: "I say, Orderly, what do the officers usually do about polishing their buttons?" I had just

THE OFFICERS' HOSPITAL

brought in his boots, carefully shined. "They usually polish them themselves, Sir." He roared and rolled over in his bed with delight as he fancied to himself he himself, a British colonel with twenty-seven years' service, polishing his own buttons. "I can lend you a brush, Sir," I remarked innocently, and he laughed some more. It would have been easy to polish the man's buttons for him, but to do so would have established a dangerous precedent, and we already had enough work to do. When he was able to get up from bed, for he was not very ill, the colonel visited the men's hospital and hired a Tommy to come every morning to polish his buttons and brush his clothes.

One of the first things I did after I was assigned to duty on the top floor and had surveyed the situation was to steal all the chamber pots, most of which were cracked anyway, and hide them in the attic. There was a perfectly good toilet only a few feet from every room, and none of the patients on the top floor was so ill that he had to remain in bed. This caused dismay for a few days, but the habit of get-

“ORDERLY!”

ting up was soon established, and I was saved considerable unpleasantness. This reminds me of one actual item I noticed later in the lists of utensils supplied by the British Quartermaster Department for its armies at the front. These lists were always printed with the noun first, followed by commas and qualifying adjectives. This one read: “Pots, chamber, India-rubber, for the use of officers.”

After O'Brien and I had polished our quotas of boots and bemoaned our fate sufficiently, we filled tin pitchers with hot water and began our daily invasion of the patients' rooms to wake them. Most of the patients on my floor had to get up for breakfast, and they had to be at the table on time, no matter where they had been the night before. The buxom wife of one of the café proprietors, whose husband had been called to military service on the Italian front, was the cause of much delay in getting up on my floor. Sometimes the officers resented the clatter I made as I came into their rooms at seven-thirty with a tin pitcher of hot water and said: “Good morning, Sir.”

THE OFFICERS' HOSPITAL

One of my patients was a Church of England padre who was somewhat indisposed from over-indulgence in whisky soda. He lay in bed all day with influenza, and while I swept his room with a long-handled brush and a dustpan, he used to argue with me. I once offered to lend him "God, the Invisible King," by H. G. Wells, but he refused politely. "We clergy only," he assured me, "have the right to talk about religion. What can these laymen like Wells know of it?" I swept in silence. "I say, Werner," he asked, "do you believe in the Holy Trinity?" "Of course not," I answered, for, after all, he had started it. "Oh, then, of course, we can't go any further," he said. I agreed. After that he was as genial as ever, but he avoided religion, and he did tell the captain in the next room, one of our own officers who was suffering from an abscess in the throat, of our arguments, and Captain D. said to me when I came to brush his room the next morning: "For Christ's sake, Werner, any son of a bitch has a right to his religion. Let him alone. I don't care much about religion, but when I saw the mothers

“ORDERLY!”

who had lost sons kneeling in Rouen Cathedral, I could see that there was a lot in it.”

We were on friendly terms with most of the officer patients, for we orderlies made it a point to serve them well, to be polite, and yet never to relax our own dignity, until they began anything with us. We did our best for their comfort, but we made them keep their place, which merely piqued their curiosity and gave us an air of superiority which they respected, and eventually most of them became friendly. One captain once asked me if I would join him in a drink at the Café d'Angleterre after I had finished work. I arranged to meet him at eight o'clock, and when I arrived we had coffee and a liqueur. “Do you mind,” he asked, “if I pour my Benedictine in my coffee?” “No, why should I?” I asked. “Oh, I shouldn't do it in London,” he said very seriously, “it's frightfully vulgar. But out heah, you know, we don't have to be so particular.” I drank my own liqueur and thought of all the American musical comedy Englishmen I had ever seen. Many of the British

162

THE OFFICERS' HOSPITAL

officers refused bravely to learn any French, and their faces never lost the look of amazement at the fact that in France even the little children spoke French.

The terror of our lives in the Officers' Hospital was Colonel Y., our oldest British patient, who had plenty of cause for crankiness, but who frequently abused the privileges of illness. He had been wounded in the leg badly, and the day he had returned to duty again he had been hit in the arm with a large chunk of shrapnel. The wound was a bad one, and he had been lying in our hospital for more than two months when I came on duty. His suffering was still great, and his combination of arrogance and kindness was almost womanly. Part of my duty at this period was to take Colonel Y. to the bath room when the orderly on his floor was off duty, for the Colonel would never use a bed-pan, and every twinge of pain in his wounded right arm he attributed to the personal cruelty of the orderly who was supporting him on the left side. I had to place my shoulder under his left arm, put my right arm around his waist and aid him gently on

“ORDERLY!”

the walk of a few yards to the toilet. He was more than six feet tall. In preparation for this macabre march I had to place on Colonel Y.'s feet two pieces of felt, and he always insisted that these ungainly garments had a right and a left foot and that I had placed the wrong one on the right foot. As there was no earthly means of telling which was right and which was left, it was always possible to be wrong. "Don't be an ass, Werner," he remarked gently one morning. "You're not an ass; N." — one of the other orderlies, who, the Colonel insisted, stank — "is an ass, but you're not an ass; you just like to make people think you're an ass." I accepted the compliment as high praise, considering the source, and aided him to the toilet. Another of Colonel Y.'s whims was his absolute refusal to use toilet paper and his insistence on absorbent cotton; he also refused to make any effort to use this material himself, so that one's humiliation was complete.

One of the most trying scenes of my life occurred on the morning when I was called into Colonel Y.'s room to assist the surgeon

THE OFFICERS' HOSPITAL

in dressing his wound. The surgeon in charge of Colonel Y. at this time was one of the best surgeons in the hospital, a captain, who seldom spoke to orderlies, patients or nurses, but one who made up in intelligence and skill what he wisely refused to sacrifice in geniality. He told me to hold Colonel Y.'s arm in my two hands, and in order to do this and not to interfere with the doctor I had to squat down in front of the Colonel with my knees bent and my heels raised, for the Colonel was seated in a chair with his grey dressing-gown around him.

As soon as I entered the room Colonel Y. gave me a bitter, critical look, and he was sure before we started that I was going to cause him pain. He protested violently against me, but Captain M. paid no attention to him. This annoyed the Colonel even more than my presence, and as soon as the dressing began, he grumbled: "God damn it, Doctor, you're hurting me." Captain M. paid no attention to this, I noticed, as I glanced fearfully up into his gruff face. I was slightly afraid of him as well as of Colonel Y. Captain M. went quietly

“ORDERLY!”

and ever so gently on with his competent work of washing Colonel Y.'s large wound. "I tell you you're hurting me, God damn you," the Colonel growled, and I used all the dexterity I happened to possess to prevent the patient from shaking his own arm.

When Colonel Y. found that his rage had no effect on the surgeon, he turned it full blast on me, who was squatting in a most precarious position a few inches from his nose. "This fool," he screamed suddenly, "is shaking my arm; let him get a better position." I was terrified, and I looked mutely up into the surgeon's eyes, but Captain M., continuing always gently with his forceps and his soapy cotton, remarked quietly to me: "Stay where you are, Werner, and pay no attention to him." This was too much for the Colonel, who had been pampered for many months by nurses who were afraid of him and who worshipped him, and his face suddenly became greyish blue, as he fainted, from rage, and not from pain. Captain M. quickly seized the Colonel's finely shaped head and shoved it briskly between the

166

THE OFFICERS' HOSPITAL

Colonel's long legs. Spirits of ammonia was administered, and the dressing continued as if nothing had happened.

When Colonel Y. was convalescent, he became slightly pleasant, for he had an essentially fine character, which had been ruined by pain and more than twenty years' service with the British Army in India. His jaws had firm, beautiful lines, and his eyes were a fine, clear, strong blue. Once when I served him his lunch on the lawn, where he was enjoying the soft sunlight, he told me that every time he went over the top at the front he was terrified, but that he was more afraid that someone else would notice that he was afraid than he was of death. "That," he remarked, "is the only thing that keeps us going." Then, when I came back for the dirty dishes, he insisted that I had disturbed his doze. "Werner, you woke me up," he shouted rudely. I had been particularly careful not to make a murmur with a dish as I lifted the tray from the table beside him, and therefore with a bursting feeling that right was on my side, I screamed at him: "*I did not wake you up,*" and the tray of

“ORDERLY!”

dishes trembled, from rage, and not from fear. He noticed it and gave me a quick glance of respect from his keen blue eyes, as I turned and walked away with the dirty dishes.

V

STATISTICS

AFTER I had worked for ten months in the wards of the hospital, my friend Hamilton, who had been raised to a first lieutenant in the sanitary corps—the only example I have ever personally encountered of the meek inheriting the so-called earth—discovered that I could operate a typewriter. After my first shameful defeat with office work, I had said no more about any clerical abilities I might be supposed to possess. But the Statistical Office needed someone to run a typewriter, and work in the wards after ten months had begun to grow monotonous. No matter how much work one had done in one day, there was the fact staring one in the face that the next day would demand more or less of the same things; no matter how many bed-pans had been required on Monday, there would be approximately

“ORDERLY!”

the same number of requests on Tuesday, or the doctors would order something to be done about it; there was no sense of accomplishment. It all reminds me somewhat of a small middle-aged man in the cellar of a New York hotel where I sometimes eat a business man's lunch. He rapidly opens oysters and clams every day in enormous quantities and serves them to the long rows of stools, and every day I have seen him I have waited for him suddenly to grow insane at the thought that no matter how many oysters and clams he opened Thursday, there would be practically as many oysters and clams to open on Friday, but, though he looks worried, he seems to keep sane, and he once told me that he goes to bed at ten o'clock in the suburbs and has a wife and a radio. I had no great reason to suppose that work in the Statistical Office would be as entertaining as work in the wards, for reports followed each other in typed monotony. But at least it would be different; I would be in one corner of a room at a typewriter by myself; and there would be no bed-pans.

STATISTICS

The Statistical Office contained a Norwegian, slow, stolid, and hard-working, who was more or less in charge of the rest of us, a Jew, Dan, clever, contemptuous and shiftless, a boy from Kentucky, frightfully round-shouldered, who had spent much of his time teaching mountaineers over sixty years of age how to read and write, and myself. The furniture was three wooden tables with chairs, one typewriter which wrote English and one typewriter with an extra long carriage and a touch like a lazy bucking bronco which wrote French, and a huge box of the shape of a giant's coffin, where the records of all the patients who had come into the hospital were kept by some filing system which we never quite understood, and which was the cause of great arguments between the Norwegian and the Jew, for the one had just learned its system, and the other always wanted to improve it.

Every morning after we had washed ourselves we started on the various reports without which the War Office in London seemed helpless. The Kentucky teacher wrote names in a long, ruled blue book, the

“ORDERLY!”

Norwegian figured out how many patients had left the hospital the day before by evacuation to England, by return to duty or by death. I typed what was known as the bed state, based on the result of the Norwegian's calculations, and what Dan did, except to criticize all of us bitingly I do not remember. I only recall that we usually replied with obscenities to his remarks about our abilities. He and I got along beautifully, for we were both of the same race, and we were both cynical about the British Army's statistical requirements, though we went through them rapidly and easily once we had discovered the simplicity of their intricacies.

After the report of the number of empty beds had been prepared so that it could go by the early morning ambulance to the office of the Deputy Director of Medical Service in Le Havre — always referred to as the D.D.M.S. — there was a knock on the door of the Statistical Office. It was not an ordinary knock, and the heavy scraping noise which it was came from the laborious rubbing of knuckles on the outside of the door. I recognized it every

STATISTICS

morning and shouted automatically, "Come in." The grave-digger — a middle-aged, dark man, too decrepit for service at the front, who pulled one leg after the other in the manner of ladies in Japan — entered. He came to see me every morning to find out how many men had died during the night. "Good mornin'" he always said somewhere behind his long irregular black moustache. "How many today?" I would consult a board tacked up on the wall and tell him. "I don't know how I'm goin' to manage it," he always answered. "What with keepin' four ready all the time and them piling up this way, it's more'n one man can manage," he grumbled. "Well, we don't poison them," I would assure him. He would copy into a dirty, crumpled note-book with the stub of a pencil the names and other particulars of the dead men, for he also had his records to keep. For once the army had chosen the right man for the right place. From the stub of his pencil to the shuffling hobnailed boots which covered his dragging feet this man was every inch a grave-digger. His ill-fitting khaki uniform was appropri-

“ORDERLY!”

ately wrinkled, and occasionally it carried spots of earth. His eternal grumbling was perfectly in character. When his note-book got too full, we gave him a fresh one, and about once in two months he asked for a new pencil. The scrawls which I watched him make in that note-book were those of a man to whom the process of writing and reading would ever remain a great mystery. In spite of his constant complaints he usually had his four empty graves always waiting and filled in the full ones promptly.

Another of my early morning duties was to send a telegram to the War Office in London, giving what was known in the hospital as the S.I. and D.I. list, designating Seriously Ill and Dangerously Ill. There was a great difference in these two designations, which one soon got to feel instinctively. If the doctor in a ward placed the name of a man on the Dangerously Ill list, it meant that he was probably going to die, but if his name was placed on the Seriously Ill list, it meant that the doctor thought that there was danger of death, but that the man had

STATISTICS

good chances for recovery. Every day I telegraphed changes in these shades of meaning to the War Office under various code words supplied for the purpose. Of these words I can only recall two: IDEE-PAW and IDESIBATE. IDEEPAW meant that a man was Dangerously Ill and IDESIBATE meant that he was formerly dangerously ill and now only seriously ill. There was also a code word which meant that a man was dangerously ill but could be visited, and when men's names were sent under this their relatives were informed and shipped out to see them. The War Office was most particular that there should be no errors in these telegrams, and in order to frighten me into accuracy, I was told of the case of two brothers who were in the hospital after the Battle of the Somme, when men were lying all over the streets of Etretat. There were so many S.I.'s and D.I.'s that the man who sent the telegrams became confused and reported the wrong brother dangerously ill, and the one the family thought was all right died. Their father wrote to *The Times* about it, and the ser-

“ORDERLY!”

geant-major of the hospital was reduced in grade and the man responsible for the error was court-martialed and punished. This story awed me properly, and I was careful to make no mistakes.

After every convoy of new patients I sat at my typewriter day and night making out long lists on glossy sheets of paper, known as C.2 Casualties. This was a report of every officer, soldier and nurse who came into the hospital every day and who went out, and it had to contain the patient's name, regimental number, regiment and disease. I copied these particulars as fast as I could as they were brought into the office by the men who had taken the details from the patients on their stretchers as they were unloaded from the ambulances. These lists too must contain no errors, for parents did not like to be told that their sons were wounded, if they were not, and it was always a mystery to me how it happened that I made no mistakes, for sometimes I was typing these particulars from three o'clock in the morning until seven o'clock at night with short intermissions for meals. Some of the ab-

STATISTICS

breviations for regiments and army corps used in these returns were curious, and I remember that as many times as I wrote it I never ceased to be interested by the breathless designation: QAIMNSR, which stood for Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve.

The War Office, through the subordinate office of the D.D.M.S. in Le Havre, sometimes sent us curious commands. I have before me a few samples which I captured. The War Office one day ventured "to remind you that it is very essential that coloured South African soldiers should not — for political reasons — be placed in the same room in any hospital as South African soldiers, who reside in South Africa, there being a very strong prejudice against the mixing of the colours." A few days later we received this notice: "It has been brought to the notice of the Base Commandant that officers in Havre are frequently seen in the streets in the company of prostitutes. The Base Commandant considers that these officers are disgracing His Majesty's uniform, and directs that Commanding Officers will in-

“ORDERLY!”

form all officers conducting themselves in such a manner.” I cannot recall how it was managed to inform all officers that they must no longer disgrace His Majesty’s uniform. However, it did not seem to be effective, for No. 39 General Hospital in Le Havre, where all the venereal cases and cases of scabies were sent, continued to be crowded all during the war with every rank from army chaplains to brigadier-generals and back to Y. M. C. A. workers.

The War Office suddenly became concerned about certain medical designations in the reports, and we received the following order:

“ Sir,

I am commanded by the Army Council to acquaint you that it has been found desirable to include a number of ladies in the Staff of the War Office Casualty Branch, and to state that in these circumstances it is desirable that Venereal diseases should not be set out at full length in the returns on A. F. No. 3034 return by fixed Hospital to this Office.

I am to ask therefore whether you would be good enough to give instructions

STATISTICS

that the following abbreviations should in future be used: V.D.G. for gonorrhoea and V.D.S. for syphilis."

Attached to this communication was an additional endorsement, containing the letter of the Inspector General of Communications, British Expeditionary Forces, in answer to a suggestion of the Director of Medical Services, Lines of Communication, which read:

"I am commanded by the Army Council to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 26th ult., No. C. 233, and to inform you that the use of the letters 'V.D.S.C.' as an abbreviation for 'Soft Chancre' in the Returns rendered by Hospitals on Army Form W. 3034 is approved."

We were also instructed that after a certain date the diagnosis German Measles would be known as "Rose Measles."

We were also asked one day to issue instructions that nurses and assistant nurses "should not play hockey or any other games near Chinese camps," and that "All Nurses, V.A.D.'s and G.S.V.A.D.'s should

“ORDERLY!”

not, under any circumstances take part in any performances, cinema, etc., for the benefit of Chinese,” and then finally that “Chinese patients in Hospitals should not, except in exceptional circumstances, be attended to by women.” What instigated these instructions was not confided to us, but perhaps one evening a nurse in Le Havre had been attacked by a Chinese instead of an Anglo-Saxon.

These solemnities of the War Office were practically our only amusement in the Statistical Office, and as report followed report in automatic monotony as month followed month, Dan and I took to moaning in our spare time that song which was more popular with the Tommies than “God Save the King” and which started:

“I want to go home, I want to go home
Oh, my, I’m too young to die,
I want to go home.”

We repeated this over and over again with additional words which I have forgotten, until those who worked on American statistics in the office next to ours complained to the adjutant that the lugubrious sounds

180

STATISTICS

coming from our room made it impossible for them to work, and we were officially commanded no longer to sing "I want to go home." I took to reading Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment" instead, and Dan resumed his quarrels with the Norwegian.

It seems impossible for me to give any adequate picture of the ennui which set in during the long months which seemed to drag on into each other with utter hopelessness. Towards the summer of 1918 we heard that we were winning, but we could not quite believe it, for no one took any stock in official *communiqués*, which seemed to be composed by masters of the art of obfuscation. In March 1918 when the Germans came crashing through with their last great effort, we thought of sending to Paris for German grammars, so that we might be able to plead correctly with our conquerors. And I recalled that in the little paper-covered history of Etretat it said that German cavalry had even penetrated as far west as that town in 1870. We knew that the British line had been

“ORDERLY!”

smashed by the German offensive, and that the French had been forced to take over part of it. We also heard the story which flew about France in spite of vigorous efforts to keep it quiet, and which later proved to be true, that a French artillery regiment had mutinied, and that the men had killed their officers and had started to march on Paris in an effort to end the exhaustion. But, cooped up between our lovely cliffs, we knew nothing for certain, and we had long since ceased to think of any definite end, hoping meanwhile that it would be tomorrow.

The whole of our second summer, 1918, passed monotonously, with interludes of drunkenness and walks into the country near-by. It remained light until late, the *jeunes filles* from Paris were flirtatious, the sea was gorgeous, the air *douce*, and the cliffs superb, but the boredom was terrific. By this time one was excruciatingly weary of doing nothing for one's self and of never being really alone.

The only variety for me was in a change of position from the Statistical Office to the Orderly Room, where there were dif-

182

STATISTICS

ferent reports to type and a telephone to answer. When I went to Paris again on leave, I brought back with me six replicas of the gargoyles of Notre Dame and ranged them in a semi-circle at the back of my typewriter on the green felt table at which I worked. They grimaced frightfully, but somehow they were a comfort. When officers came into the Orderly Room, they looked at my gargoyles and tried not to lose their military bearing. It was always interesting to watch them break down eventually into humanity and laugh, and I was never forbidden to keep the gargoyles on my table. They annoyed the other sergeant in the room, but as I was now of the same rank as he, he could say nothing, and when he saw the commanding officer look at the gargoyles and smile, he decided that there must be no military harm in them after all. I was forbidden, however, to eat chocolate while on duty.

In October 1918 sixteen months had passed from the time when we had left New York. The first six months had been glorious novelty, and I never remember being bored during that period. After that

“ORDERLY!”

there was a great desire for change — the period during which many of us tried to transfer to the artillery, the aviation, or anything that would take us somewhere else. I even remember making application to join the staff of *The Stars and Stripes*, that newspaper published in Paris which was supposed to amuse the troops. Then, when those who were denied transfers came to realize that they were doomed to remain set in their places for a painfully indefinite period, the melancholy, the ennui and the resentment set in. We were melancholy at the prospects of the future, bored with the present, and we resented the entire war, its past, present and future, as a personal insult. It was somewhat as if one had discovered after six months that one had married the wrong woman, had spent another six months trying to change to another but found the first thoroughly tenacious, and then had been condemned to an eternal period of waiting for a wife to die.

In October President Wilson and the Kaiser began to write to each other again, and the newspapers were filled with

184

STATISTICS

phrases which seemed to offer as little hope of a settlement as those which had preceded them many years before. By this time it was impossible to take diplomatic correspondence seriously, for it seemed to bear no relation to torn flesh and frost-bitten toes, though, of course, by its inexorable logic it caused and could prevent them. As for me, I preferred Dostoevsky. Meanwhile, the Russians had performed their revolution, but we heard very little of that, for it was considered a bad example. The War Office sent us a memorandum warning us that men stuffed with Bolshevik propaganda were wandering around France injecting it into soldiers, and that any soldier found with any of it in, on or about his person must be apprehended immediately. We did hear, too, that the Germans were exhausted, and the British, French and American lines were undoubtedly moving up; even the official *communiqués* made that clear. The fact that the Kaiser thought it worth while to answer the President's letters and vice versa was the indication of a possibility of peace, but by now we were all far too cyni-

“ORDERLY!”

cal for hope. The war seemed as if it would occupy the entire duration of our lives.

But presently, in some mysterious way, the fighting seemed to grow less active, and rumours of peace about to be established came along daily. One of them was more definite than the others on November 7th, but somehow I refused personally to believe it and I remained that night in the Orderly Room continuing “Crime and Punishment.” At the Hotel de la Plage there were two parties. In the main dining room downstairs behind the green bottle-glass windows of this Norman *hôtellerie*, about one third of the men of our staff were rapidly getting drunk, while upstairs in the private dining room with the red checked table cloths most of the officers were competing with them. While I sat in the office worrying about the woes of Ras-kolnikoff, a telegram arrived from the French post office. It informed us that at fourteen hours an ambulance train was leaving for Etretat with the largest consignment of patients we had ever received. The figures were staggering, especially when one realized that it was now nine-

186

STATISTICS

thirty at night, that one third of the hospital staff was already drunk, and that the patients would arrive at about three in the morning. It was necessary to inform my superior, Lieutenant Hamilton, and it was first necessary to find him in the welter of the private dining room of the Hotel de la Plage. I sent a waitress in for him and waited in the hallway, while from downstairs at the men's banquet came the strains of a song about a woman who was unfortunate enough to have married a man who proved to be impotent. Lieutenant Hamilton came out, and as the door opened I saw the officers inside dancing with each other under a haze of tobacco smoke. Lieutenant Hamilton was surrounded by a captain, also very drunk, and before I could tell them my news, they wondered if I would not have a drink. I accepted gladly, and while the captain went into the dining room to get the whisky, I tried to make clear to Lieutenant Hamilton's bloodshot eyes that we were due for a monster convoy of patients in a few hours. He laughed gently and talked of other things, as I tried to make

“ORDERLY!”

him look at the figures on the little blue telegram, until Captain Peters arrived with the glass of whisky soda. We stood there in most unmilitary attitude, the captain having his arm around one of my shoulders and the lieutenant around the other, while I tried desperately to get in sips of whisky soda and to correct the impressions Lieutenant Hamilton was giving to Captain Peters of what he considered to be my literary future. As we stood thus enjoying ourselves, up the stairs came the commanding officer to arrange with his officers for the distribution of the patients who would be with us in a few hours. We broke from sentimentality, and I tried to hide my glass. Out of the smoky room where the officers were still dancing with each other, came rocking Lieutenant V., with his walrus moustache, a young physician, much in liquor at the moment. The commanding officer stood in the hallway and asked those officers who were not too drunk to answer how many empty beds were in their wards. Lieutenant V. kept interrupting solemnly with the sober statement: “Put them all on my ward.”

STATISTICS

He managed to say this so seriously that the commanding officer, who was now a short doctor who was not a very good judge of people, and who did not seem to approve of whisky, thought for a moment that there might possibly be 690 empty beds on the top floor of the Hotel des Roches Blanches, but suddenly a whiff of the Lieutenant's breath punctured his veracity.

As I went down the stairs with the commanding officer, we heard the cracked strains from the adjoining room where the enlisted men were having their party

“She married a man —”

“Tell them to stop singing that song,” commanded the Major. “They don't have to sing that song, that Frenchwoman can understand English.”

He was referring to Madame, who, in her stiff black gown, sat at her desk accounting for her *haricots verts* and looking like a French adaptation of the three monkeys of Nikko. It was unpleasant for me to face that long table of more than thirty drunken soldiers to inform them that they must not sing that song, especially since

“ORDERLY!”

the proprietress did not seem to mind anything but her accounts. However, orders had to be obeyed, and I whispered to one of the drunken sergeants the commanding officer's command. We left the building to prepare for the ambulance train, and the men probably went on singing.

On November 11th we received this terse memorandum from Le Havre:

“CR. R/5438.

“To Base Commandant. Havre
SITUATION REPORT. Nov. 11th 18
Hostilities ceased at 11.00 today.
From: Communications.”

And then everybody, including all the patients able to walk, got drunk, while even those without legs were merry. It was an effort, I remember, to corral the patients back into the beds that evening, for they had succeeded in stealing the instruments of the band and were having a happy time marching about the town in their bulky blue flannel uniforms blaring forth discords. By nine o'clock, however, they were back in the hospital buildings, and the attempt on the part of some of our own

190

STATISTICS

exuberant men to burn down the Y. M. C. A., as an expression of their opinion of the latest Y. M. C. A. secretary, had been suppressed by means of side-arms. Then those of us who were not already insensible continued drinking boisterously until early morning. Discipline, rank and inhibitions were forgotten for the night.

There followed a period of two months, which seemed endless, during which we gradually got rid of our remaining patients, sent our mattresses to Le Havre and prepared the hospital buildings for closing. The British Government was particularly anxious to get rid of us quickly, because it was paying rent to the Frenchman who owned the hospital buildings. But it was also particularly anxious that every bit of hospital equipment should be carefully accounted for. But at last one day every patient was out of every bed, and every mattress was in Le Havre. Then we made out endless reports and waited for our orders to move. Meanwhile, the men were getting mutinous, for they no longer believed that they would be shot for disobe-

“ORDERLY!”

dience, and that restriction on natural shiftlessness having been removed, there was no discipline and very little work. Drink and miscellaneous mischief occupied our remaining days.

VI

THE WAY TO RELEASE

ONE evening of one of the first days in January 1919 we were to leave Etretat forever, and the confusion and excitement were so great that there was scarcely room for regret. Packing up army packs so that they would look proper and contain all that they were supposed to contain took ingenuity and practice. All day we were at it, and some of us, including myself, could not master it without the aid of those who were better at such things, for we had not moved once since we had arrived in France, and army packs were therefore mysterious. At last, however, every man's underwear was in every man's pack, and every blanket roll was properly adjusted.

We marched to the railroad station just after twilight. Accompanying us through

“ORDERLY!”

the streets of the town were almost all the inhabitants of Etretat. They stood behind the iron gates barring them from the stone platform and yelled sentiments and jokes at us for the last time, while we got into the compartments, some of which were in white German third class railway carriages appropriated as part of the terms of the armistice. It was dark; the lights on the station platform burned blue; there were shouts and scurrying to say goodbye to café proprietors who had proved friends or to more intimate acquaintances.

We were to go in this long train to Brest, where we would embark on a ship for the United States. Being on the clerical staff I occupied a second class compartment with three other sergeants, the bugler and an army field desk. Most of the third class compartments contained eight men, who slept sitting up on the hard wooden seats. We were scarcely more fortunate in our second class compartment, for the field desk occupied one third of the floor and seats. We placed our packs on the rest of the floor, and two men stretched out on the seats on either side, while I slept on the

194

THE WAY TO RELEASE

pile of packs, with the iron handle of the field desk as a pillow. Pinned down by the bodies of my companions, two on each side, I seemed to lift their weight from my chest every time I breathed, so that it was difficult to sleep. Then, too, one of the officers in the compartment which adjoined ours, and which was connected with it by a small peep window through which we could continue presenting our reports for signatures, was in the habit each night of attending to his more personal wants by perching himself on an open window, while the train wound slowly along. This made us indignant, especially since the officer in question was too ignorant of military matters to succeed in being the martinet he preferred to resemble; we cursed him, wished him constipation, and composed ourselves for sleep.

In the morning the train stopped, so that we might get out of our prisons for breakfast. Before leaving Etretat we had been joined by another organization, so that we were now about three hundred men, and all of us rushed madly for the freight car in the middle of the train where

“ORDERLY!”

the provisions were cooked. We received our coffee, our tins of beef, our cheese and were given time to eat them on the railroad embankment before the train started again. The trip then continued its painful slow monotony, which was all the more maddening because of the pent-up excitement we all felt at the prospect of returning home at last and of being masters of ourselves soon again.

Two days and two nights we spent in our compartments, with long, wearisome stops at places where we were not permitted to move from the track next to the one on which our train was travelling. The longest stop was at Le Mans, which I remember chiefly by the coal-besotted railroad yard and the two or three hungry Morrocans who rummaged eagerly among our garbage on the chance that they might find something not too terrible for consumption. They looked sadly out of place and singularly unhappy, with their chocolate brown sullenness, under their bright red fezes.

We ourselves were happy only at meal times, and at the prospect of ultimate re-

196

THE WAY TO RELEASE

lease. Then, too, the scenery of Brittany, as we could see it from the one window not blocked by the field desk, was pleasantly different from our Norman scenery. There seemed to be more woods, and the women were dressed differently from those peasants to whom we had been accustomed.

We arrived in Brest early in the morning and started up the long hill that led to the American Army camp six miles from the harbour and the railroad yard. On the way we were jolly; several times we were permitted to rest in the fields by the side of the wet road, for our packs were heavy, and our shoulders were not used to them.

Arriving in the huge army camp, we were assigned to what was literally a mud flat, where unstable tents had been pitched in the soggy mud in anticipation of new arrivals. Each tent was pitched over half a tent flooring, and the other half of the space in which we lived consisted of soft, soggy mud. All around the outsides of the tents was more mud, softer and soggier, for Cape Finisterre was noted for rain. During

“ORDERLY!”

the three weeks of our residence in the camp it rained some time during every day and night, occasionally fiercely.

I occupied a tent with three other sergeants. Our packs and blankets and clothes we spread out on the half a tent flooring, and we tried to keep out of the mud of the other half of our home as much as possible. Whenever one went out into the streets of tents, one walked in lanes of mud and settled higher than the ankles. It was impossible to keep either dry or warm. Most of the day I had to spend in the tent occupied by our adjutant and commanding officer, where I sat on a box and typed reports, for the paper work seemed to increase as the war grew less dangerous. Day and night we worked on the most complicated returns we had yet encountered, and periodic trips to the headquarters of the camp, where an arrogant, but uncertain captain attempted to explain the inexplicable, were barren of comfort.

For our meals we were marched to huge tents, via muddy roads, in pouring rain. Standing up to the ankles in mud at long

198

THE WAY TO RELEASE

corrugated-tin tables, such as is used for roofing, we ate out of our aluminum mess kits the heaps of meat, potatoes and other concoctions that were hurled at us from huge cauldrons as we entered. More than a thousand men stood in the dark, eating rapidly, while, to make us forget the mud, the haste, the food and the rain, a brass band played popular tunes and ancient marches. Especially at supper the scene was drably fantastic. Outside in the rain, waiting for our places at the corrugated-tin tables, hundreds of others were lined up, and the band blared majestically all the while. After we had hurriedly finished our food, we passed outside and dipped our dirty mess kits rapidly into a cauldron of steaming water, on the top of which the grease of many mess kits had already accumulated. Contemplatively in the tent one tried to remove the lanes of yellow grease which the rapid dipping had not eradicated.

Seventy thousand men waiting to depart on ships were in the camp at Brest while we were there, and more arrived every hour. Thousands of negroes rushed

“ORDERLY!”

about in hectic confusion, for the negroes were being sent home as soon as possible, at the request of the French government, which considered that France possessed more than enough mixed babies.

Every day there were “details.” These consisted of working in various parts of the huge camp to prepare it for tents and barracks for new arrivals. Tent floorings were being carried about everywhere; digging went on constantly in the mud and the rain; and the influenza rate was so high that the camp hospital was overcrowded and refused all men who did not have at least 104 degrees of temperature. This was a hardship for the sick, because, in the army, if a man is not officially sick and admitted to hospital, he is officially capable of work and must accompany the others into the mud, the wind and the rain, and he must also go for his food to the mess tents and wait his turn in lines of mud. Many of our men became ill, and the doctors cared for them as best they could in the tents, without medicines.

At night the four of us slept on our tent floor, first scraping off as much mud as

200

THE WAY TO RELEASE

we had brought in. After midnight on the first night, a terrific gale blew over Cape Finisterre, accompanied by wild, vicious rain. Our tent blew so that we feared it would suddenly disappear into the neighbouring encampments. Two of my companions clung to the tent pole, while the other two of us rushed outside in our rain coats and tried to make tent pegs stick into oozing mud. All around us in the dark and the rain were men whose tents had blown down, or who were struggling desperately to prevent the immediate collapse of their shelter. It was pleasant in the morning to hear the hundreds of bugle calls from the neighbouring detachments, and, as some buglers had more wind than skill and others more musical talent than wind, the effect was pleasingly discordant.

When we had been in our tents for several days and nights, a general order came to us one day saying that Theodore Roosevelt, formerly President of the United States, had died, and that at 11 o'clock that morning our adjutant would line us up in the road outside our encampment and read the attached tribute. Our adju-

“ORDERLY!”

tant was nothing except prompt at things like that, though he was able to accomplish literally nothing for our comfort. We were duly lined up in the road in front of our tents, and Captain B. began to read in the bulbous voice with which he made all announcements. His words always came out as if his mouth were full of broken wind at the moment of elocution, and the result was a bewildering conglomeration of bellowing, spluttering and spit. He had just begun the tribute to the late Theodore Roosevelt, when a line of tent floorings on the tops of men's heads came along the road. We were supposed to be standing rigidly at attention, but we could not help turning our heads to watch the approach of tent floorings, which seemed to move in the air slowly without human aid, for only the legs of the bearers were visible. They had halted when someone with free eyes had spied us in the way, and a soldier came hurrying up to our captain, with the request from his captain: What the hell were we doing blocking the road this way. Captain B., interrupted in his tribute, spluttered that we were commemorating

202

THE WAY TO RELEASE

Theodore Roosevelt. The courier rushed back to the halted tent floorings and arrived back at us a minute later with the news that his captain said that unless we got the hell out of there in two minutes, he'd run his tent floorings over our damned fool heads. Captain B. shouted "Dismissed," and we all scurried for our lives, leaving Theodore Roosevelt to the angels.

After about a week of tent life, we reached the next stage in the tortuous, narrow path to home: we were sent into wooden barracks, so that we might be given the thorough cleansing necessary before we would be permitted to return to the United States. The folks at home must never know that we had been dirty, and therefore the army was prodigal in its distribution of new clothes. We had all received new clothes before we left Etretat, but these were almost ruined by the mud baths of tent life and the other exertions of travel. Our new quarters were marvellous compared with what we left. There were tin roofs over our heads; the beds were of chicken wire and consisted of an upper and a lower; and the floor was of hard dirt in-

“ORDERLY!”

stead of soft mud. If a button was missing from an overcoat, we hurled it on a pile of supposedly ruined garments and asked for a new one. Puttees that were slightly mud-caked hung crazily on the heap of old clothes, which grew and grew until it seemed as if no one would be able to move it. We were taken one morning to the baths, which were in huge wooden huts, and here we waited in the cold, wearing nothing but identity tags, for the hot and cold douche that was supposed to remove the last traces of France from our brave, white souls.

Before any detachment could leave Brest, it had to be inspected thoroughly to see that it was clean, and that each man had his full equipment. We prepared carefully for this inspection, everybody forcibly helping everybody else, for if one man was lacking one button, we might be detained another two weeks. All was confusion, and many men were missing knives, forks, spoons and buttons, when the little dark captain from the camp headquarters arrived one morning to inspect us. We spread out our belongings in uniform neat-

204

THE WAY TO RELEASE

ness on our beds, and we ourselves were lined up in the lanes outside our barracks, while the finicky, sour captain passed up and down finding fault. He found so much fault that he made himself furious, and he proclaimed openly that we were in no fit condition to return to the United States, and that he, for one, would never approve of our being sent home until every man had a fork. Finally, at the prayer of one of our officers, he relented, and grudgingly consented to return the next day, but we were warned that unless everything was perfect when he returned, we should probably spend the rest of our lives in Brest. That prospect was the worst conceivable; we had all heard of purgatory dimly, but we all were in Brest, and at the moment it seemed worse than any possibility an almighty imaginative god could invent. That day was the most hectic of our trip. Everybody took a personal, irascible, nagging interest in everybody else's personal appearance. We went up to each other like worried mother hens and shouted: "For Christ's sake why don't you get a new puttee." The barracks were swept un-

“ORDERLY!”

til the earth floor showed a beautiful dull finish; the pile of dirty clothing — one of the inspector's chief objections to us — was removed magically; the latrines — tin garbage cans with precarious boards over their openings, which reposed too near our sleeping quarters — were made attractive by a special staff of men who seemed to have particular talent for such work. By the time the little captain arrived next morning every man looked like a second cousin to General Pershing, and we were passed forthwith.

But that did not mean that we left immediately. Day and night I sat in the officers' wooden barracks making out long lists of the names of officers and men. What there was to report in such quantities I can no longer remember, but the work kept several of us busy all the hours of the morning, the afternoon and the night until after ten, while the big Belgian police dog of one of the officers ran round our legs helplessly. Finally, our “move orders” arrived, and we were all warned that as we marched down the six miles from the camp to the docks, camp officers

206

THE WAY TO RELEASE

would be stationed all along the way, and that if we did not keep in step, if our buttons were not all buttoned, if our packs were not perfect, we should be sent back to the camp to dig ditches for another three weeks. I have never known terror such as that instilled into us by those officers in the camp at Brest. They had the one power over us which they knew to be effective: the power to keep us in Brest; and they did not seem to mind how long they themselves remained.

On the morning of our departure we were up while it was still dark, and of course it was still raining, a fine, thin rain, which slowly permeated one's khaki and rusted one's disposition. We started on the long march with our heavy packs at about eight o'clock on the rainy January morning, and along the march were the dreaded officers, who kept eyeing us critically, but as they said not a word of command or of cheer, we were evidently ripe for Fifth Avenue.

On the docks were large locomotives with long strings of grey freight cars; negroes were singing gently and gaily as

“ORDERLY!”

they unloaded sacks of flour; the terror was almost gone.

A tender took us to a long grey ship in the harbor. It was now called the *Agamemnon*, but it had been the Crown Prince something or other of Germany. The sense of freedom as we stepped on the deck of this ship was intoxicating. No one could now keep us in Brest, but we were warned not to make rude remarks, for one detachment had been sent back to the camp from the transport for expressing its opinions of the camp officers of Brest.

In the hold, where we tumbled to deposit our packs, were flat strips of canvas, four high, attached to iron poles. Seventy of us slept in each section of the hold. We dropped our packs on the beds and rushed up on deck, joyous from the effect of clean sea air. The ship itself was beautiful — the long, narrow kind, after the fashion of the *Mauretania* and the *France*. The decks were spacious, and we were permitted everywhere except in the first class dining room and the smoking room, which were reserved for officers.

It was January, but as soon as we got

208

THE WAY TO RELEASE

out to sea, the air proved mild for that time of year. Now there was no longer danger of submarines, and we were permitted to smoke on deck. Many of us chose to sleep on deck in our clothes and a blanket, rather than in the sections of seventy men, which were stuffy and conducive to seasickness. But the sailors came along at five o'clock in the morning with hoses to wash down the decks. "Heads up, soldier," they shouted, and one had to come out of sleepiness fast to avoid their soaking water, for they enjoyed that type of joke. They also took a great interest in stealing our shoes, for they had black shoes, and for some reason they coveted our tan shoes. On the first day out many men were shoeless, and thereafter we slept with our shoes under our heads.

We stood in long lines on deck waiting our turns to go for our food to the dining room in the hold of the ship. I remember one night after the sun had gone down standing in line in front of a row of port holes which gave a view of the brilliantly lighted officers' dining room, where negro sailors were serving oyster stew. I felt

“ORDERLY!”

just like a Christmas picture in *Life* for about 1911 of ragged children looking into Childs' window. Our own food was seasickly. Sometimes we received sardines done in cottonseed oil, and sometimes on rough days stinking sausages. Some of the men bribed negro sailors to sell them the remains of the officers' mess, but the prices were high, for they knew that we had all been paid before leaving Brest; they charged four dollars for a pie and fifty cents for an orange.

I find among my papers the following copy of the “Agamemnon Daily News, Published on board the U.S.S. Agamemnon in the Interest of the Crew and Passengers.” It is dated Monday, February 3, 1919 and reads:

MOVIES FOR TODAY

THE LITTLE DUTCHESS — MADGE EVANS.
TWO RENEGADES.

U. S. Navy Press

Washington: — Dr. Theodore T. Woop, director of Chinese educational mission and his two assistants, C. H. Hsie and Ben

210

THE WAY TO RELEASE

Sen Wu found murdered last night at home in fashionable northwest section. They were shot Wednesday and bodies were found by Chinese students. Today detectives are bringing here from New York, a highly educated Chinese, about twenty-five years old to be questioned regarding the murders. Every indication of desperate struggle, but no evidence of robbery. Police puzzled by finding no motive for crime.

Archangel: — Another violent attack by the Bolsheviki on American, Russian and British positions at Taresevo, compelled hard-pressed and outnumbered little allied column in this sector to withdraw Thursday approximately forty miles.

New York: — Lacking impulse from any quarter, trading in stocks today dwindled to insignificant proportions. Reactions from one to five points made by oils hides and leather preferred Maxwell motors New York air brake Ohio gas. U. S. Steel lost a fraction and Brooklyn transit hardened leaders in general rallying slightly at end. Closing irregular.

Saloniki: — Detachments of Allied troops have arrived at Adrianople and put

“ORDERLY!”

end to Turkish terrorism of inhabitants which has been in progress during war. Greek inhabitants now wear hats instead of the fez which Turks forced them to wear.

After a trip of almost ten days, during which we felt content at the freedom from dirt and from work, we arrived in New York harbor. As the ship passed Coney Island we were permitted on the boat deck, where we had not been permitted during the voyage. I realized the reason for this quickly, when my eyes saw soldiers in barred cages, like men in a zoo. They had gone mad during the war; they were dirty, unshaven for more than a week and tormented. I shall never forget the shifting, pathetic eyes of one man with a dirty scrub of little stiff hairs around his chin, as he helplessly thought of whatever the war had caused him to consider himself.

We were taken off the *Agamemnon* in a tender at about six o'clock of a crisp February evening. The lights in the tall buildings shone transparently through flat dark surfaces. We landed at a railroad yard in Jersey, and there was my father with a box

THE WAY TO RELEASE

of cigars and a shoebox full of chicken, and he was accompanied by a younger brother, who wore a derby hat. I was so bewildered by the strange sight of a derby hat, which I had not seen in almost two years, that I could scarcely greet them in the few minutes between landing from the tender and being shunted into dirty day coaches, with dusty red plush seats. I managed to open the box of cigars, and some of us puffed luxuriously for the hour of our dark journey to we knew not where.

Finally we got out of the train and marched into a camp filled with wooden barracks, which was more luxurious than anything we had yet encountered. It turned out to be Camp Merritt on the Palisades. After we had dropped our packs, we hurried to a hut, where we were officially deloused by means of warm shower baths and kerosene. Sleep that night was so pleasantly sensuous that I can almost remember it.

The next day we had grapefruit and cornflakes for breakfast, and we received passes to go into New York, where most of us had come from. The ride across the

“ORDERLY!”

Fort Lee Ferry, which I had crossed so often in years before to take walks along the Palisades, gave me a sense of assurance and tranquillity, and the ride down Riverside Drive on a 'bus in the quiet of a winter afternoon was almost melancholy.

Every other day we received passes to go to New York. The day after I had been there for the first time in almost two years, I was wandering about Camp Merritt, wondering what to do with myself during the long afternoon, when a soldier came up to me. "Say, you want a pass to New York?" he asked, as he handed me one. "Sure," I said, holding the piece of paper in wonderment, "but aren't you going to use it?" "No," he answered, "I was there once on the way to France; I don't want to see it again."

**RETURN TO the circulation desk of any
University of California Library
or to the**

**NORTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
Bldg. 400, Richmond Field Station
University of California
Richmond, CA 94804-4698**

**ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS
2-month loans may be renewed by calling
(415) 642-6753
1-year loans may be recharged by bringing books
to NRLF
Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days
prior to due date**

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

NOV 19 1991

NOV 12 1991

YB 21319

U. C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



C061414010

765823

DS70

19

W38

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

